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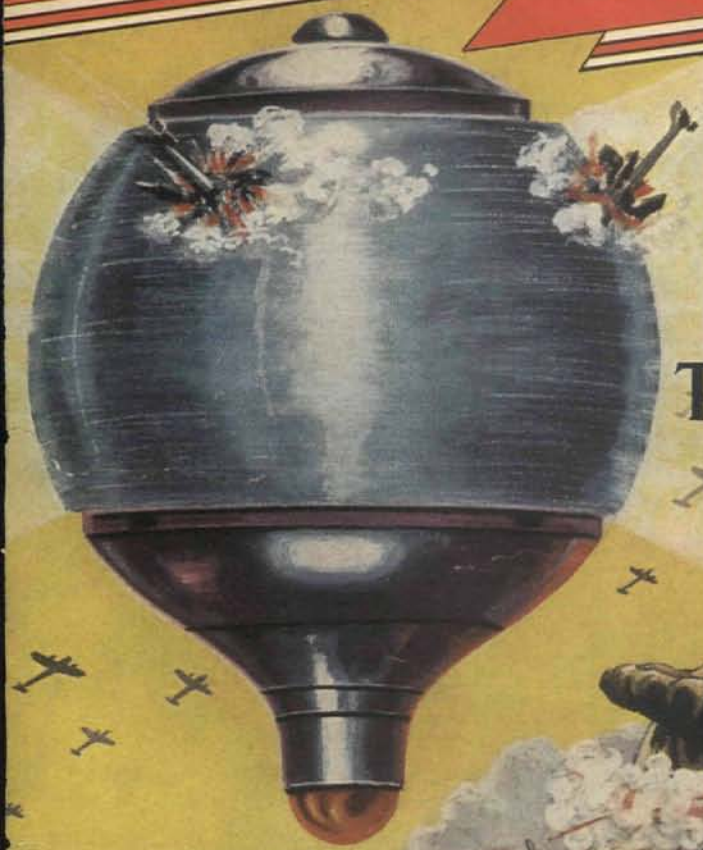
DECEMBER 1940

Famous FANTASTIC Mysteries

RED STAR MAGAZINE



The Sun-Makers

Will McMorrow

—

The Other Man's Blood

Ray Cummings

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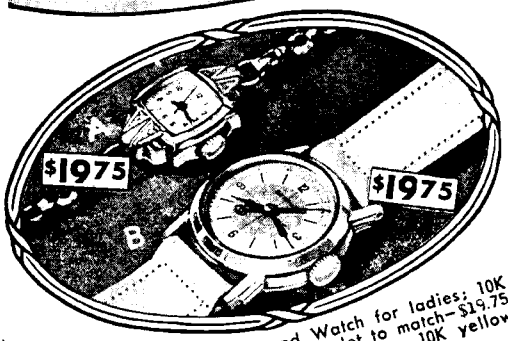
I'll trust you – I'll give you 10 MONTHS to Pay



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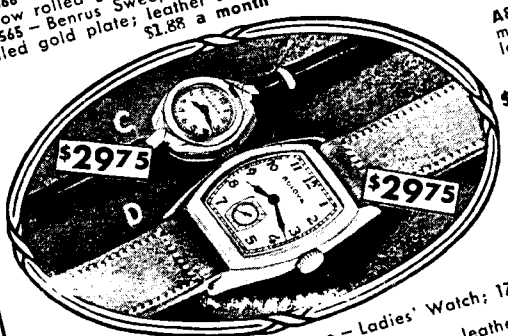
B-9565 – Benrus Sweepsecond for men; 10K yellow rolled gold plate; leather strap. $19.75
$1.88 a month

A265 – Engagement Ring; large diamond and 2 other diamonds; 14K yellow gold. **$4.75 a month**

A84/C75–Bridal Set; 8 diamonds; both rings 14K yellow gold.
$3.15 a month



C-R154–Bulova's newest feature – Ladies' Watch; 17 jewel "Goddess of Time"–$29.75.
D-M134–Bulova feature for men; 17 jewels; leather strap–$29.75.
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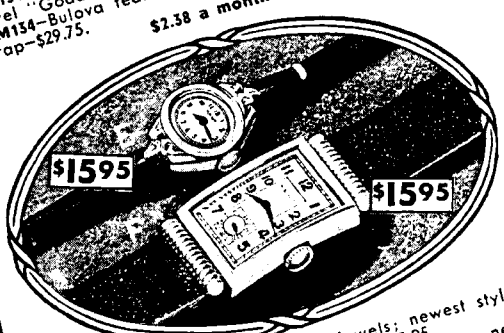

E-P159–Ladies' Kent Watch; 7 jewels; newest style 10K yellow rolled gold plate case–$15.95.
F-K190 – Man's Kent Watch; 7 jewels; sturdy; new style; 10 yellow rolled gold plate case–$15.95.
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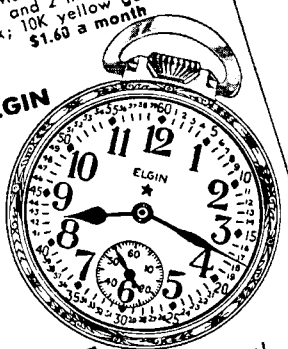

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Vol. II DECEMBER, 1940 No. 5

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The February Issue Will Be On Sale December 11

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.

WILLIAM T. DEWART, *President & Treasurer* WILLIAM T. DEWART, JR., *Secretary*

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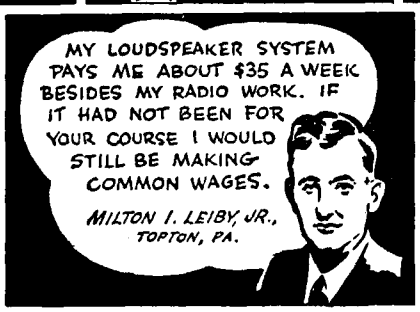
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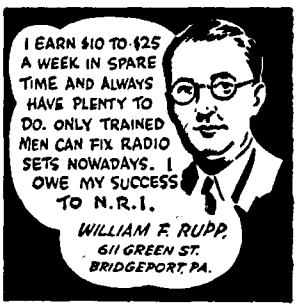
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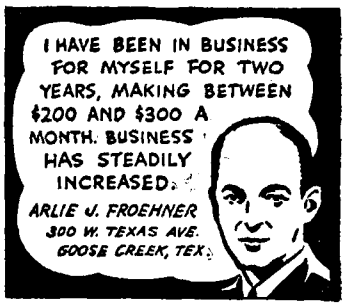
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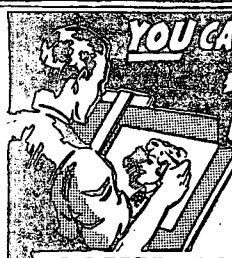

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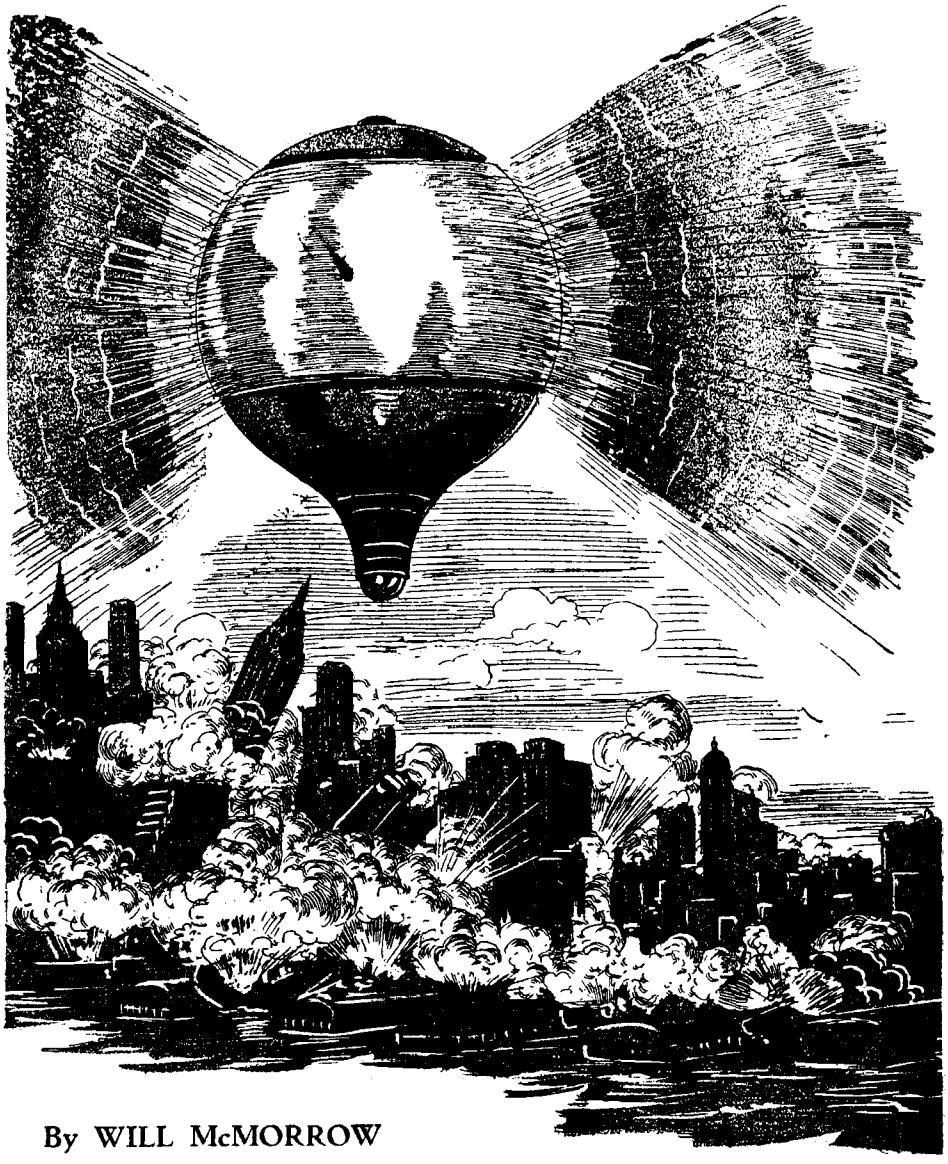

By WILL McMORROW

THE SUN-MAKERS

CHAPTER I

ROSSEY EXPLAINS THE EARTHQUAKE

I HAD not seen Rossey in seven years, and I would have liked to sit over our coffee with him and smoke a retrospective cigar and talk of old times; his dinner had been excellent and his cigars were above reproach—he knew how to live in those matters—but he would not let me. He insisted on taking me up to the observatory on the roof of his country-house near Hastings-on-Hudson, and making me

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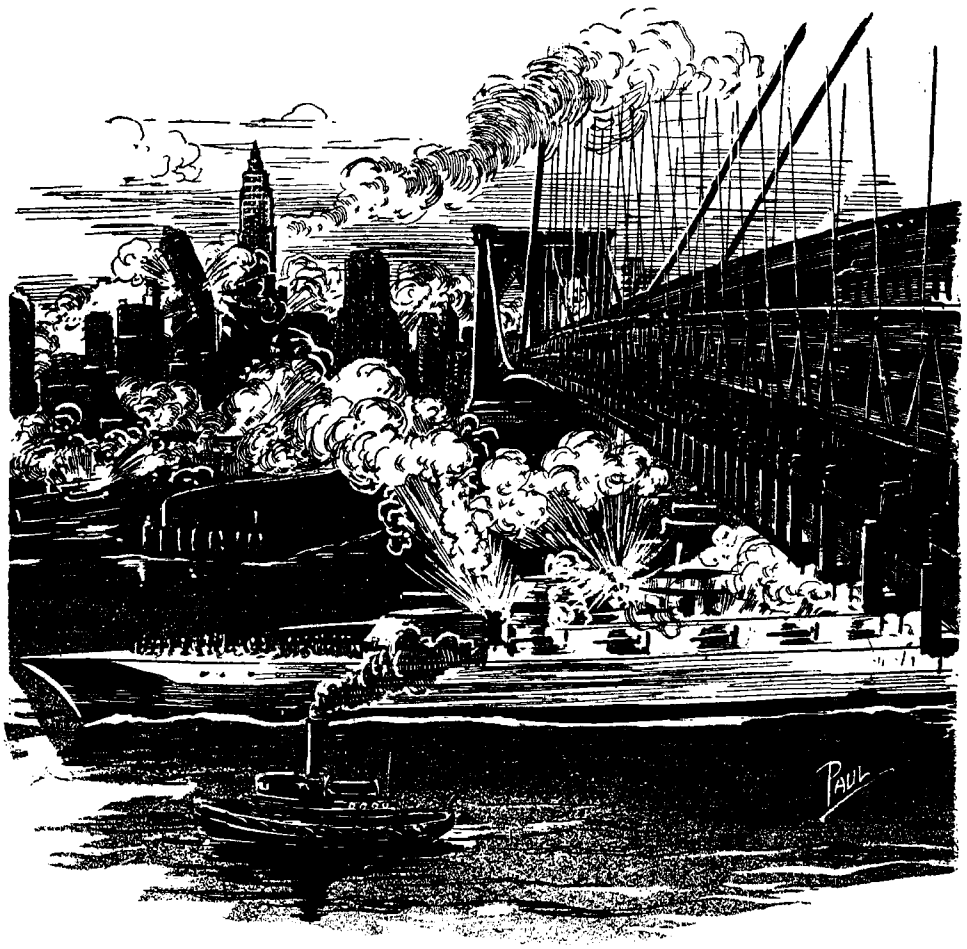
A superhuman Blitzkrieg launched from Outer Space! Families on the run—governments in chaos—the army baffled in all attempts to stem the fury! What could the world do to save itself? Could Science find the answer, or was all mankind's work of centuries doomed before the heartless Venusian onslaught?

look at confounded stars and talk scientific nonsense to me.

A man with a hobby, I thought as I puffed at the match he held to the excellent cigar, is a bore. Especially is a man a bore who has a senseless hobby like astronomy.

He talked sensibly enough of most things; people like that often do, on subjects other than their hobbies. Every one used to know the Rossey Sprinkler System in those days. This was the same James Rossey. He had a business seven years before that was worth a million dollars, and he had sold it out, and taken to looking up in the air with a spy-glass—when, if he'd stuck to business, the chances were all that he would have been worth two millions at the end of the seven years,



The bridges across the East River swayed on their foundations and most of the great edifices of the Metropolis collapsed like piles of dishes when a tablecloth is jerked from underneath them

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or at least a nice million and a half.

He is a thin and fussy man, a bundle of nerves; wonderfully energetic for all his fifty-seven years.

"Hurry up, Hardiman!" he said, fidgeting over me.

He glanced at the tall windows of the dining-room, which over-looked a lawn running steeply to the river.

"It is getting dark and it's just about right to observe Venus."

He grasped my arm and walked me up three flights to his observatory.

"This is all right, Rossey," I said, looking around me and rubbing my hands as though I meant it. "You have quite a plant up here."

"Not bad for an amateur," he said, fussing with an enormous telescope. "There's a Troughton and Simms' transit instrument that's not half bad. This telescope is a reflecting equatorial —cost me eighteen thousand dollars."

"Humph," I said, looking at the instrument with more respect. It was as big as a six-inch gun. "Well, Rossey, I'm not up on telescopes particularly, but I judge that one's a stem-winder." He was sighting through a little telescope that lay along the back of the big one. I cast about for remarks. I suppose I knew as much about astronomy as the average man, although I never had been a crank on it. But often, when I have been looking up at the sky I have had a feeling of how wonderful it all is and that I must brush up on it a little.

"What was the reason for that earthquake not long ago, Rossey, that made such a fuss in the eastern states? The papers were full of it. Mrs. Hardiman and I were sitting on the porch that night, after we put the radio to bed. We were looking at the moon, I remember, and having quite an argument over whether it was a man or a woman in it when the darned thing happened.

"There was some talk about rocks sliding around in the middle of the earth but I don't put any stock in that newspaper talk. I told her I'd ask you about it. And what's all this talk about a woman in the moon? Is that one of those fool popular notions or is there something in it?"

But he just went on fussing with his little spy-glass and then he jumps down and squints through the big one.

"There it is now!" he cried in excitement. "Take a look! No—close the other eye—if you must!"

I sat in the chair and looked and saw the moon as plain as could be, but somehow or other I could not even see the man in the moon let alone the lady, through that telescope. And I was surprised to see that it was the new moon, whereas last night I had seen it full.

"Great!" I said, waving my hand.

"That instrument magnifies four thousand times," he said, pleasedly. "There are only two larger in this country. You see it well, don't you? It is in its inferior conjunction and is at its nearest to the earth. It is twenty-six million miles away, and that glass brings it within six thousand miles of your eye more or less."

"More or less," I agreed. "If a thing is six thousand miles away it does not make much difference, I suppose, whether it is a little more or less. That is about the same as though a man in San Francisco was to look out his window at Tokyo—a little more or less would not cut a figure."

"That's the idea," he nodded. "I suppose you know that it is most like the earth than any other planet in the solar system. That is, the size, situation and density, in the figure of her orbit and in the amount of light and heat

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which she receives from the sun."

"IS THERE a man or woman in it?" I asked after looking in vain.

"That is a most interesting question," he said. "That is to say, the question of intelligent life or the nature of the intelligent life which is there! It would be unscientific to think that it was uninhabited; the same natural forces are at work there as here."

He gestured toward the horizon.

"It is only men's natural vanity that leads them to think no other reasoning exists outside the earth. With reference to the planet in question I should say it is very improbable that any creatures which we would recognize as men are living on it, although it is unthinkable that intelligent beings do not inhabit it—beings, possibly, far more intelligent than ourselves."

"My wife says there's a woman in it," I put in. "I can only see a man even if he is not plain just now."

"What do you suppose you are looking at, Hardiman?" he asked after a moment's silence. "You are looking at the planet Venus!"

"You mean—a star?" I asked, taking my eyes away from the telescope to get this right.

"Of course not. The sun is a star and stars are not suns. Venus is a planet—a cool, non-luminous body like the moon or the earth."

"Let me have another look," I said, squinting through the eye-piece again. "Do you know I think you are right! So you think there are people living over there, do you? How is it I never heard of this before? I remember reading in the papers one Sunday about people living in canals somewhere—Mars, I think—but I did not even take stock enough in that talk to go outside and have a look for myself. But I never heard that Venus was much account."

"That is because Venus is the evening star," he said. "It is always low on the horizon, and the only time it can be observed is just after sunset or in the early morning, and it is hard to see clearly then because the sun is near it. It is between us and the sun so that we have to look into the eye of the sun, almost, to see Venus whereas Mars is further away from the sun than we are, and we turn our backs to the sun to look at it. That is why we can see Mars better, although it is smaller than Venus and further away.

"It is a strange world," he said into my ear. "In the winter on Venus it is much colder than our North Pole, and in the summer it is about two hundred in the shade. What kind of people do you think could stand a climate like that? Its highest mountain is twenty-seven miles high. They have a great deal of wind and rain."

"What do they think of us?" I asked, humoring him.

"The earth is the brightest star in the sky of Venus," he said promptly. "You understand that I use the word 'star' in the popular sense. There can be no doubt that the astronomers on Venus spend much more time studying our earth than they do studying any other heavenly body. They have no moon, by the way. As a matter of fact there is every reason to suppose that the creatures who live up there are watching us this blessed minute, just as you are watching them."

"Oh, get out!" I said. "You don't really believe that, do you, Rossey? Why, it gives me a sort of an uneasy feeling! What do you suppose we look like to them?"

"It isn't a question of supposing," he said, rather tartly. "You well-to-do

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people should spend more of your time and money on science and less on ruinous and silly competition in servants and automobiles. Then you wouldn't use the word 'suppose' in relation to astronomy. It is the most exact of sciences."

I made a soothing noise and nodded.

"We are a great, blue star to the Venusians," he continued, "and we appear so bright in their sky that we cast a dark shadow! Our continents and seas are apparent to their telescopes of very ordinary power; with an instrument such as this they could see the City of New York."

I took another squint.

"It's getting harder to see every minute. Doesn't it ever get up higher than that?"

"Certainly—in the day-time. That is what I told you; that they see us perfectly because we are directly over their heads in their night, which is our day; whereas we see them only in the morning in the East just before sunrise, and in the evening as they follow the sun down behind our horizon. Their world can be seen in our day-time too, with a telescope—and with the naked eye every seventh year when it is brightest."

"Very interesting," I said, straightening up and re-lighting my cigar. "Now how about the earthquake and the man in the moon?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you haven't heard?" he conjectured, with a certain caution in his tone.

"Heard what?"

"About the connection the earthquake had with a big explosion in Germany several years ago and about a so-called aerolite that fell near Toronto last week."

"I remember an explosion of a nitrate plant in Germany that killed a thousand people and wiped out a couple of towns. That was some time ago. That had nothing to do with the earthquake, did it?"

"Nitrate plant," he chuckled. "If it fell in Central Park the wiseacres would say the reservoir blew up. Highly explosive substance—water is—under certain conditions! Queer coincidence that the color of the flames, as reported by the few lucky ones, happened to be the color that shows off best against a pale blue. Much queerer coincidence that your earthquake tallied to the second with that strange disturbance Anderson out at the Lick Observatory reported as occurring on Mount Galileo on Venus."

"WHAT in the world do you mean?" I asked.

"And the great tidal wave in Chile the autumn following the explosion in Germany," he went on. "I remember the newspapers made quite a thrilling story out of the Atlantic sucking down into a hole in the ocean bed and then spouting back again. Wiped out several towns there, too."

"What has that got to do—" But he was off to a flying start.

"That coincided with the time of the great sun-spot and also with the extraordinary variation of the moon's orbit," he said. "I don't need to tell you, I hope, that the sun is just a blazing ball of incandescent material and that the moon—to the best of our knowledge—is a dead and uninhabited world. But both of them vitally affect the earth! The sun-spot affected our magnetism and the variation in the moon's path affected our gravitation. Here they were two natural phenomena and just as they were exerting their greatest effect on us, something which

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was not a natural phenomenon occurred on a planet which we believe to be inhabited!

"We thought there might be a connection between these several events—that the activity on Venus might be aimed against the earth because we are the nearest and most accessible planet to them—"

"What is all this?" I interrupted in turn. "I don't make head or tail of it!"

He nodded with an irritating air of pity.

"I suppose not," he said, patting me on the shoulder. "And I couldn't explain it to you in less than a month. But you must have heard something of the Toronto aerolite. But first let me tell you that the explosion in Germany, now forgotten by almost everyone, was, to our minds, the result of that disturbance on Mount Galileo in Venus.

"We think it was in the nature of an experiment; the flash of the explosion could easily have been seen on Venus. As to the mass of molten metal that fell at Toronto—it was sawed open after cooling and cavities were found in it. In those cavities were pieces of carbon which showed an animal structure under the microscope. A fragment of this carbon was vaporized and the glowing vapor subjected to spectroscopic analysis.

"All this of course was done by astonomers who had no ax to grind and no reason to seek publicity so that you hear it now for the first time. But the point is that the analysis showed up in 'D,' the unmistakable double black line!"

He looked at me in a sort of owlish triumph.

"What in thunder are you talking about, Rossey?" I asked, laughing.

He stared at me in the dim light from the lamp suspended above us and I saw his pleasure turn to dissatisfaction.

"Nothing," he said, somewhat sulkily.

"Oh, come on," I said, handsomely. "Tell me all about the double black line in 'D.' You're not tiring me a bit; in fact I'm awfully anxious to learn about those things. What is the double black line in 'D,' Rossey?"

"The light of only one heavenly body shows that line under the spectroscope, showing that an unknown gas is present in its atmosphere; we call that line 'Venusite' because that heavenly body that exhibits it is Venus! Do you understand now?"

"You mean—"

"Yes! That so-called meteor undoubtedly came from Venus and when it left that planet there was some kind of animal inside that aerolite."

"LET'S have another look," I said, going to the telescope again. "Now I have it. There's a bright crescent, like the new moon, and there is something like the old moon in the new moon's arms, only brighter. What is that, Rossey?"

"That is one of the mysteries of the planet," he said, just as happy to show his ignorance. "You mean that ashy light between the arms of the crescent, I suppose. We don't know what that is. It is caused by something on the dark surface of the planet. It is probably some kind of artificial light, unless they have some way of reflecting light from the sunny side. The bright crescent, you understand, is the sunlight. If you will picture to yourself the sun as it is now, below and behind Venus, you can see how it would just light up a rim of it for us."

It had grown quite dark and the Star

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of Evening was sunk below the Western horizon.

"Let's go down and get a drink," I suggested. "All this talking has made me infernally dry."

He went himself to the cellar to fetch the liquor; Mrs. Rossey and I waited in the billiard-room. I pushed the balls idly about on the table. The game is Rossey's favorite, although he is a better mathematician than he is a billiard-player.

"Do you think there is anything in it?" she asked suddenly.

"In what, Mrs. Rossey?" I asked, while studying a new position.

"In all this talk about Venus. There has been such a time over it! Mr. Rossey is constantly in the observatory and sends and receives a dozen telegrams every day to and from other observers. I was so glad to see you this afternoon; I hoped you would take his mind off this queer affair for a few hours. It's just one of his notions isn't it, Mr. Hardiman?"

"That's it," I assured her with confidence. "Take him into New York and let him see a couple of good Broadway shows and sport around for a while and you'll see he'll forget all about it and laugh at himself for taking stock in such nonsense.

"I get that way myself sometimes when I attend too closely to business and I find the only thing to do is to get away from it for a while. It's all imagination, you may depend on it, Mrs. Rossey. Why, he wanted to tell me upstairs how the weather was on Venus. That was a pretty large order, wasn't it?"

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Mr. Hardiman," she said.

"There is a great deal of bosh about this astronomy," I went on. "I studied it up quite a bit when I was a boy. It is just a theory and you know how these scientific theories keep changing and every time they are quite sure that now they are right."

"You sound so sensible, Mr. Hardiman," she cried. "It is a positive relief to listen to you."

"Well, Mrs. Rossey," I said, making a difficult cross-cushion, "I am a plain businessman and I do not claim any credit except for using plain commonsense."

"What do these Venusians look like?" I asked Rossey, smiling aside at his wife, when he came back with a bottle. If you oppose a man too much on his pet notion he is liable to get pig-headed but if you humor him he will begin to apologize and the first thing you know he will see that he is a little bit off his clump.

"That largely depends on whether they come from the region of heat or cold," he said, frowning reflectively. "Their world does not revolve on itself like the earth; it does not revolve at all! It is like the moon—the same face is always turned toward the earth. It is terrifically hot on the sunny side and as extremely cold on the other. I imagine that intelligent life will be found on the sunny side, in which event we must expect that they are peculiarly constituted creatures who can live in a climate hot enough to boil water."

"Peculiar is the word," I agreed, filling my glass.

"Their atmosphere is very heavy and wet; I imagine they will be some kind of birds."

"Birds!" I said. "Well, well!"

"How is Mr. Rossey?" asked my wife when I arrived home that evening.

"He looks well," I said, "but he seems to be a little touched. He had quite a high temperature on the brain."

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"A temperature?" repeated my wife. "How much was it, Frank?"

"About two hundred in the shade," I said.

"Goodness!" exclaimed my wife. "But what is there in that to laugh at?"

CHAPTER II

THE WHIRLING MACHINE

I LIVED in those days in Westchester County, in a suburban development called Thermopylae, in an eight-room house on four lots. It was about eighteen miles out of New York City and was between Pelham Manor and the city line.

The next day was Saturday and it was raining so I telephoned in to the office and dropped around to our village library and looked over some works on astronomy. I did not make much sense out of them and I decided it was their fault; I have always been a man accustomed to bank on my own judgment and I have found that when I do not understand what a man is driving at it is generally because he does not know himself.

I do not blame ordinary people for not seeing the trouble coming from Venus but I do blame the experts in that line, the professional astronomers. Very few of them were like my friend Rossey. There was a man named Lowell out in Flagstaff who laid out a map of Venus, showing various straight lines on it that could not be made in the course of human nature and must have been some kind of structures made by the inhabitants; and there was one Pickering, who looked over the stars for signs of life and found plenty. But most of the professionals pooh-poohed these men and said it was all in their eyes.

The favorite argument of these professionals, according to these books in our library, was that the other planets were either too hot or too cold for human beings to live on. That is the kind of an argument an Eskimo would make if you described Africa to him and told him people lived there. And, for that matter, I do not know any human being that could stand our climate around New York.

When winter came around those very astronomers who said Mars was too cold would get into a steam-heated flat and hug the radiator which is proof enough that the earth was too cold for them, too. And I have never noticed them basking in the sunshine in the summer. Or they say that the air is too thick or too thin on the other planets; well, we have air and water

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Of Tired Kidneys—How To Get Happy Relief

If backache and leg pains are making you miserable, don't just complain and do nothing about them. Nature may be warning you that your kidneys need attention.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking excess acids and poisonous waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

If the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters don't work well, poisonous waste matter stays in the blood. These poisons may start nagging backaches, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

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on this earth and I notice that the air is too thin for a fish and water a bit too thick for us.

So I closed these books and asked Miss Fetherson, our librarian, for something funny and she gave me a book of essays by a man called Simeon Newcome. It was published in 1906 and one essay was entitled "The Future of Human Flight." I got several good laughs out of it. He proved up to the handle that men were never going to fly, and said that if you multiply the square of the diameter by the sector of the distance and divide the result by 3.1416 you could perceive the facts for yourself.

Perhaps I have not got his equation just right as I did not think it worth while to memorize, although he said it was quite important.

He said that the only way for men to fly was to harness a lot of birds and be carried up in a sling. If I ever get on a school board I am going to see that the youngsters study the works of Simeon Newcome and a good work on astrology and a map of the world made in the fifteenth century and some natural history out of Herodotus and if possible the minutes of the meeting of the board of aldermen that decided that Columbus was a dreamer. It will be great training for the boys and girls and they will learn that they must think for themselves and take the professionals with a large pinch of salt.

At that time, however, these books convinced me that my friend Rossey was seeing things; and I was just as well satisfied, as it would be bad business if people were going to worry about the stars. In my time I have seen business-men put in charge of a committee for doing and thinking things half as queer.

I went home and set to planting bushbeans in my garden, the weather having cleared up. We were very fond of beans; Mrs. Hardiman had a recipe for a bean salad that was a winner—she put olive oil on them and sugar and vinegar and I do not know what else and we were very fond of them that way.

WE SAT on the porch again after dinner and watched the moon come up over our cherry tree and talked about it and this and that. I enjoyed discussing such subjects with Mrs. Hardiman and got more pleasure out of it than talking with experts as they always had cut-and dried opinions and you must take them or leave them.

"Do you hear a peculiar noise?" she asked after a while.

I listened. "No," I said.

"I guess it is in my head," she said. "It must be the quinine I took. It is like as though it was a boat away out there on the water. It is a sort of humming. I have heard it off and on for the last hour."

"Maybe they are firing the big guns at Sandy Hook," I suggested.

"It is something like that," she agreed. "Only it is more like a train going over a trestle very far off."

During the night I woke up suddenly and raised my head up onto my elbow and began to listen and I do not know what it was that woke me; but I could not hear anything. She was sleeping alongside me and I was going to wake her but I thought I would not as she is sometimes cross if she is awakened without a good explanation.

My next door neighbor in seven rooms on three lots, was Captain Marlin. He used to be a skipper of the Rockville Center, one of the ferry-boats of the Long Island Railroad cruising between Long Island City and Thirty-

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fourth Street in Manhattan to and fro across the East River. He made a fine figure of an old seadog as he stood on the head-land at the foot of our street, clad in a brass-trimmed hat and a long blue coat and swept the rolling meadows with his spy-glass. Most of the former commuters still living will remember Captain Marlin; many of them chipped in to buy him that set of nautical instruments of which he was so proud—the quadrant and the sextant and the rest including the spy-glass—which were presented to him with a neat address in memory of the time the Rockville Center had lost its bearings in a fog and had sailed down the stream and had made a land-fall at the Battery wherefore they had gotten to their offices safe and sound but two hours late.

"There was a terrible storm somewheres last night," he said, approaching the privet hedge which I was clipping after returning from church.

"Where was it?" I asked respectfully. The captain had charge of the weather for the neighborhood.

"I don't rightly know," he admitted. "I've been looking over the report in the paper and there's no mention of a storm but there certainly was one somewhere and it was a rip-snorter! My compass swung off to nor' nor' west at midnight and stayed there for half an hour and I never saw anything to patch that in all my years afloat."

"Maybe your compass was out of whack," I ventured.

"No, sir!" he frowned. "The earth was out of whack last night, that's what! I could hear those old magnetic vibrations as loud as surf on the Long Island south shore."

That evening I took Mrs. Hardiman up to New Rochelle to see the movies. Afterward we dropped in to see the new yacht club concerning which there was great discussion, one faction of the town wanting it in one location and another wanting it somewhere else, and still a third party not wanting any at all. I was one of those in favor of moving it to Thermopylae and had quite a discussion with a man named White who was in favor of scrapping the whole thing and trying to get our money back that we had subscribed.

The third party got what they wanted in the end for the next day, Monday, the Whirling Machine came down from the sky.

Captain Marlin saw it first with his famous spy-glass when it was still a brilliant point of light high in the blue vault.

I had slept uneasily and fretfully through the night and rose early; I could not imagine what I had eaten that had disagreed with me. I went for a walk before breakfast, taking the road along East Chester creek that leads to Mount Vernon. I had a slight headache from my sleepless night.

I noticed the peculiar behavior of the birds; there was a flock of pigeons on Garvin's lawn in front of the hotel and when I approached them they did not take to wing but ran and fluttered over the grass as though unable to fly. I could have caught one of them in my hands. I think they were listening to the whistle of the Whirling Machine, which was keyed so high at the time that my ears could not catch it.

"As you know they use captive bats, besides microphones, nowadays to detect the approach of any similar danger; bats, they tell me, have unusually acute hearing; they steer themselves in the dark by the faint sounds reflected from surrounding objects. I don't vouch for this but so they say.

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WHEN I returned to our street again from the creek road the whistling was quite plain. To put it that way gives a poor idea of the sound. If you have ever heard a thousand factory sirens going at once you know that the sound is really a kind of silence and it is only when it stops or changes or when you notice that there are no more other sounds that you become aware of the screaming din. And you will have experienced the peculiar uneasiness that approach of the Whirling Machine produced. It was as if you were out in the open in the presence of danger and could find no place to hide.

Captain Marlin was standing at the foot of the street with his glass to his eye.

"What is that infernal noise?" I asked him peevishly.

"Look," he said, handing me the glass. "See what you can make of it."

I peered through the glass. At first I saw nothing but the blue vault and then I saw a shining mote floating an infinite distance up in the ocean of air.

"Do you think that thing is making it?" I asked, still gazing through the tube. "And what do you think it is?"

"That's it fast enough," he said.

I thought he was right. I've noticed when a sound is far off you can place the direction of it but when you get quite near it you lose it; it's just the opposite with a smell which you can find easily when you're near its source but which can't be located at all when you are away off no matter how strong it is. A great many people like myself had their senses sharpened for them in the days that followed that Monday.

"What do you make out of it—you?" I persisted.

"I guess it's a heliocopter," he said.

"Heliocopter," I repeated, consideringly; shouting to hear my own voice.

He put his glass under his arm and stumped away. Mrs. Marlin had come out on her back porch and called to him after giving a fleeting glance upward as though to rebuke whatever silliness had diverted her husband from his waiting breakfast.

"And do you think that is more important than to have our eggs burnt to a crisp?" I heard her say as she shepherded him past the open screen door.

"What is it?" asked my wife anxiously as I entered the house.

"An airship of some kind," I said. "Maybe our government bought it from abroad."

"Oh, what a shame!" she exclaimed. "And I suppose those foreigners never told our people what an awful noise it made! You ought to write to your congressman about this, Frank."

The noise was now the kind produced by a buzz-saw which is eating its way through a knot in a log—a sustained and deafening shriek.

My wife endured it with compressed lips through breakfast. She came into the hall as I was taking my hat from the rack on my way to the station.

"This is too much of a good thing!" she said, indignantly. "Somebody ought to make a complaint about it—the idea of those people making such a time! I suppose they think we should be waiting for them with a reception committee; if I had my way they would be marched straight to the station-house the minute they landed and given a good fine for their noise!"

"It is rather an imposition and that's a fact," I agreed, glancing through the doorway. "Hello—there they are up there now!"

I walked out to the porch; Mrs. Hardiman went back to the kitchen to wash up the breakfast things with a

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remark that she would not encourage those foreigners.

The Whirling Machine was suspended in the air about a half a mile up and over the point where the Sound meets the creek. I thought it was perfectly still though I know now that it was spinning with great speed. It was of bluish gray, except where the sunlight glanced with almost undiminished brightness from a line down its polished side. Its shape was that of a top and from where I stood looked to be about one hundred feet from crown to point and a scant sixty feet in its greatest diameter.

The neighbors were standing on their porches and in the paths leading to their front gates, and craning their necks to see the strange thing in the sky. They cried to one another that it was the new airship that the government had bought and that it had flown across the Atlantic.

Mrs. Marlin came to her door, drawn thither against her will by the captain. She was a vixenish woman of about sixty.

She looked up in the air for a long moment and then her jaws snapped and she turned and stalked back into the house.

"Nonsense!" she cried out loudly. "I don't believe it! John, come inside this minute and don't make a big fool out of yourself!"

The Whirling Machine drifted in from over the Sound until it was nearly directly above us; it moved as smoothly as though it was wafted onward by a gentle zephyr. And then suddenly it seemed to shoot earthward.

"It's falling!"

"There it goes!"

"That's the way with all these blamed foreign inventions," cried Captain Marlin to me, as he hobbled past me on his way to view the wreck. "They always end in a bust-up. I do hope and trust there were no Americans on that fool ship!"

But the Whirling Machine had not been wrecked. I saw it standing upright in a field as I walked down to the station to catch the 8:39 to town. I would have liked to have a better look at it but I had no time to waste on amusement.

The afternoon editions of the papers carried front-page stories about the new airship, which was from Belgium. One of them in a neat box, bordered with tiny American flags, had a few words of greeting from the captain of the airship to the people of America, in which the captain said that he liked the Americans, thought the American woman the best dressed woman in the world, and hoped his trip would increase the spirit of goodwill and friendship between the United States and Belgium. And one of them—a poor failing sheet—printed a dispatch from Washington to the effect that the American Government had not bought any airships from Belgium and knew nothing whatever about the matter. There was also an obscure mention of the fact that radio fans had complained of extraordinary static for the past forty-eight hours.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST BLOW

I RETURNED to Thermopylae on the five-fifteen as usual, arriving at the station at a quarter to six. The three taxicab drivers had a new cry for the occasion but I did not see that they were getting any unusual custom.

"Take you out to see the airship, boss? This way to the Belgian airship!"

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I walked up Woodrow Wilson Boulevard—our main street was known as that—and passed the field in which the Whirling Machine had alighted. It was summer and the sun was still high over the horizon.

Hank Garvin, who owned the field, was making hay while the sun shone, as the saying goes. Hank was one of the old residenters. He had farmed the site of Thermopylae before the suburban development had appeared. He had held out this ten acre field from the sale of the village site hoping to get the advantage of the increase of land value and sell it off in building plots some day at a fancy price. Meanwhile he rented it out as a fair grounds and to the circus that visited us each summer, and he grazed three cows in it between times.

Now he was patrolling its split-rail fence, with a club trying to keep boys out—which he was not succeeding in doing—and collecting quarters from other sight-seers who wanted to approach the "Airship" and were too dignified to dodge about him and defy him as the boys had done. A scattering fringe of youngsters were gathered about the Whirling Machine throwing stones at it, with a watchful eye out for Hank, who, they supposed, owned it.

I took Mrs. Hardiman down to see the local sensation after dinner.

"It fell right into your lap, didn't it, Hank?" I said, congratulatingly as I paid his toll of fifty cents and escorted my wife through the gap in the fence at which he stood guard.

"People think everything is clear profit," he mumbled, munching his fine-cut as he made change. "Costs a sight of money to bring an attraction like this clear over from Yurrup."

"The expense must be terrible on you," I said, winking at Mrs. Hardiman. "You paid them to come here, did you?"

"Didn't exactly pay 'em," he admitted. "But they're using my property, ain't they? I calculate they had ought to pay the taxes anyway. I'm waiting around to tell 'em so soon as they come out of that there thing."

"Do you mean to say they haven't opened the affair up yet?" I asked.

"No, sir—they ain't. I guess they seen me awaitin' here and they're watching their chance to duck away in the dark. I'm figuring on throwing a cable over the blamed thing and keeping them here until they pay me for the damage they done to that field but it's smooth all over and I don't see nothing to tie onto. You ought to see the hole they knocked in the ground—must be fifteen feet deep—when they came down."

He darted toward the fence.

"Here, you young Peters, get back over that fence or I'll tell your pap on you!"

We walked up to the Whirling Machine.

It seems unbelievable now to me when I think of it. If we had known what was inside that machine we would as lief have walked up to a raging lion—I am sure we would have chosen the lion.

I imagine the crowd had kept at a respectful distance earlier in the day but now the huge, shining thing had towered over them all day, motionless, their timidity had passed. They crowded around it, tapping it with their fingers, prodding it with their umbrellas and sticks and an enterprising youth was trying to scratch his initials on the smooth surface with a pen-knife.

It didn't seem worth the half-dollar to get close to it. It was like paying to

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stand close to a blank wall. So I watched, with satisfaction, the perspiring young man in greasy overalls trying to make an impression on the hard surface. It looked like aluminum. Presently he broke the blade of his pen-knife and cursed and went off to complain to Hank.

We followed as this promised to be interesting.

However, Hank had trouble of his own. Late arrivals had come in too fast for him and through gaps in the fence several hundred more people had flowed into his field. Along the road was a line of automobiles and here and there family groups were seated on the grass with Thermos bottles and heaps of sandwiches in the center. A peanut roaster and a pop-corn wagon had appeared from nowhere.

With the help of several recruits Hank was busy roping off a space around the Whirling Machine and pushing the curious back. A young man wearing a straw hat perched sideways on his head elbowed his way through the crowd.

He stepped over the rope into the partly cleared space and flashed a green card in my face.

"I'm from the Morning Paragraph," he said briskly. "You running this off?"

He pulled a pencil and paper from his pocket and twisted his head around toward another man who was setting up a camera tripod.

"How about it, Joe?"

"Get the crew grouped right here in front," said Joe.

The young fellow with the pencil pointed it at me.

"When did you leave Belgium?"

I told him I had never been nearer to Belgium than Staten Island and he went off, nosing in and out of the crowd like a dog trying to pick up a cold trail. By and by he was back in front of me again with his back turned. He was looking up at the silent metal bulk. Joe stood along side rolling a cigarette.

"Doesn't look like any airplane I ever saw," he commented disgustedly. "Why don't they come on out?"

"Publicity stuff," the reporter said. "Well, I'm going to get some action."

AT THIS day and time it seems funny for anyone to have complained that way about the Whirling Machine when you consider it was about the biggest piece of news that ever happened along. But it looked peaceful enough just then.

My wife tugged at my arm.

"Let's go. It's getting late," she suggested nervously. "I've got to put Johnny to bed. Somehow I have an idea, anyway, that thing is going to explode or something. Frank—there seems to be a million eyes looking out of it."

I laughed at her of course. But I had the same idea, too. I felt I was being gazed at by sharp eyes. And I am not temperamental or poetic or imaginative or anything like that. It just shows that there is such a thing as instinct even if you do spend your time with plumbers' supplies and fresh salesmen.

But just then something happened. The crowd, with the help of Hank's lieutenants, had been pushed back to the ropes with much argument, so we left a clear space of a good twenty feet all around the Whirling Machine. I had my back turned at the time but I heard a sharp report like a tire blowing out and I turned around in time to see something like a wet football fall from the side of the Machine about thirty feet up. The crowd jumped back

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on each other's toes. I know they did because an elderly party in a gray suit standing in front of me did a standing, broad-jump backwards and landed on my foot with all his weight. It was no less than two hundred pounds and he moved fast.

I was near the front of the crowd, so, looking over the broad-jumping golfer's shoulder I could see the thing that had fallen out of the Machine.

Since then I have read about twenty different descriptions of that animal No two agree. But during the last couple of years I have been in front of scientific societies starting with the local Society for Scientific Research, here at home, and including the big Astronomical Convention at Washington, last year, and my description has never varied in spite of all their cross-examining. Sir Garrett Ballantree, one of the council and at one time an internationally famous astronomer, went so far as to say that my testimony showed plainly that if I had continued my profession of plumbing supply selling I would have been unusually successful and that I had the brains of an average businessman in every particular. I have always been precise about those things and believe in sticking to a straight story. Sir Garrett can size a man up quickly.

I maintain it was like a wet football with feet.

The animal, whatever it was, fell with a plop to the ground and lay there quivering for a moment. It was a greyish-bluish color and about a foot long, round and tapering off a little toward the end where its head should have been but wasn't. Instead of a head there were feelers like seaweed and along its back appeared a ridge like the fin of a fish. Its short feet ended in long claws.

It was altogether an ugly-looking affair and I know if I had been drinking I would have known right away I did not see it at all.

Its glistening sides moved in regular jerks like a fish out of water. In fact, if it were not for the tiny legs, I would have thought it a fish of some kind. Then it started scurrying around among the feet of the crowd and the women started to scream.

It slithered over my toes and bumped against the elderly golfer's buck-skin shoes.

"Damnation!" he grunted, and made a kick at it.

Then Hank reached it with a tremendous blow of his club and it lay quivering. Hank's club squished into it again and again. He seemed sore about it. He shook his cudgel at the Whirling Machine.

"Consarn you!" he shouted. "Scaring decent folks with your danged furrin jokes."

A sort of a black slime oozed out of the creature, which had been battered out of shape—if it ever had any. The golfer crowded closer and the Morning Paragraph man scribbled and chuckled over his wad of copypaper.

That is another thing all those learned fellows seemed peeved about. They expected evidently that we would have preserved that Canus Veni, as they afterwards christened the animal without seeing it, in alcohol for their inspection. In view of what happened right afterward we were mightly lucky to get away with our lives, any of us in the field that evening, let alone capturing specimens. To think that we all stood around that silent globe of metal chattering and munching peanuts, in total ignorance of what it held, makes me shiver when I think of it.

Of course Professor Pickering ex-

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plains that the thing was thrown out as a sort of test by the inmates of the Machine to make sure creatures from their section of the universe could live in the atmosphere around Thermopylae. So he says in his book, "Days of Dread."

THE reporter shoved the paper in his pocket and looked around.

"Anybody got a ladder here?" he said, rubbing his hands together. "Getting some action now. Publicity maybe. Good stuff though. How about it, Joe?"

Joe grunted and helped push a ladder through the crowd. It was a rickety affair and I wondered what could induce the reporter to trust himself to it. He propped its twenty feet of patched wood against the side of the Whirling Machine and climbed gingerly up.

"You tell 'em to come on out of that," Hank shouted after him. "And don't go to busting the ladder."

The crowd, as usual, had some jokes ready and offered several suggestions to the man on the ladder with an eye on Hank. But the climber paid no attention to them. He pounded on the metal with a hammer someone handed him. The golfer was holding the ladder for him, having got to the post of honor first.

I have only a confused idea of what happened next. My wife was pulling at my coat-sleeve trying to lead me further away and I turned my back to the affair of the man on the ladder to answer her. I wanted to stay and see the fun when the ladder broke.

I was facing the crowd when there came a flash of light and a deafening report. I jerked my head around instantly but I have a distinct recollection of the way the faces of the crowd were lit up in the gathering darkness for that second, with their smiles frozen on their faces as they would appear in a flash-light photograph taken unexpectedly.

At first glance nothing had happened. The man on the ladder had not changed his position much. His head was bent back sharply and his body had stiffened. He seemed to be posing in an attitude of violent effort and pretending to be trying to push the Whirling Machine over. Then unexpectedly he relaxed and fell to the ground like a bag of clothes dropped from a window and lay all collapsed in a heap with his straw hat rolling a few feet away. There was a disagreeable smell as if someone was singeing a chicken to get the pin-feathers off.

I caught my wife just in time as she tumbled over and I started half carrying her out of the mob. There was a lot of confusion, the panicky ones in front trying to trample their way toward the road and on the borders the curious ones were trying to get closer to the Machine. I grabbed the arm of a white-faced man who was crowding his way past me.

Together we carried her out of the crush and across the road. She began to revive. The shouts and screams of that pack of frightened men and women streaming by us were enough to rouse anybody.

The next flash and report came just about then and I straightened up to see the elderly golfer, still holding on to the ladder, collapse in a heap.

Things happened fast from then on.

I do not know exactly whether the gas tanks in the automobiles parked along the road blew up before or after I heard that peculiar sparking, sputtering sound in the air over the Whirling Machine. At any rate the blazing gas-

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oline sprayed over the crowd and here and there men rolled in their burning clothes on the ground with everyone too busy saving his own life to worry about them.

A man was running toward me—he looked like a country constable of some kind—stopped and grabbed at his hip-pocket. The uproar was so loud that I realized when he fell to the ground and the unmistakable sound of a whistling bullet went by my ear, that his revolver was exploding in his pocket.

My wife twisted around in my arms and sat up, rubbing her forehead.

"What happened?" she gasped. "Oh, yes. That poor man!"

She looked so scared I was afraid she would faint again so I helped her to her feet and, supporting her, started to put as much distance between ourselves and that infernal thing as possible. The man with me, meanwhile, had disappeared to save his own skin, I suppose. It was hard going; every once in a while a panic-stricken person would careen into us stumbling past. A lot of them were shouting and moaning. They were badly frightened, every mother's son of them.

It was getting dusk by then. We reached the edge of the village and joined a crowd that was milling around in front of the old Seaman mansion and pointing over toward Hank Garvin's meadow.

As we came up to them there was a flash way toward the South and a dull explosion a few seconds later. The old house behind us rattled in every window.

"My God! What's happening anyway?" some woman screamed.

I saw old Captain Marvin standing in front of a group and waving his telescope toward the Whirling Machine. Evidently he had been telling the story of last night's phenomena to any one that would listen.

"Happening?" he shouted out toward the voice. "I'll tell ye what's happening and I seen it coming a long time. It's Bolsheviks, that's what it is. It's a red plot. Did you hear that explosion just now? Could you locate where it came from?"

No one answered. From the direction of the meadow came a sound of screaming as if someone had suddenly seen a ghost. It was an insane cry and I shivered.

"Well," Captain Marvin continued, looking around triumphantly, "I know what blowed up just then. It was the ammunition stores at Sandy Hook. And listen to that—and that!"

He pointed his telescope toward two other points on the darkening horizon. I missed the flashes, waiting to hear the screaming again from the meadow, but after a long, breathless wait the little group caught the muffled sounds of explosions again.

"Fort Washington and the arsenal at White Stone," he snapped. "I know the directions they lay in, you can bet. They're gone—in smithereens."

The crowd murmured in horror.

"Now look here, Cap, how do you know—" I began to say something reassuring to the crowd when I felt someone twitch my sleeve and turned around to find Rossey behind me. He was dusty from head to foot and puffed for breath but his eyes had a feverish look like a man wakened out of a nightmare.

"Here's the man at last," I said, gladly. "What's all this deviltry about, Rossey?"

He jerked his head at me.

"Come on, Hardiman. Let's get away from here fast. There isn't a moment to lose."

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I looked at my wife uncertainly.

"I can walk," she spoke up. "Only hurry. Mr. Rossey is right."

HE LED the way toward the deserted main street of the town talking over his shoulder.

"Drove most of the way from Hastings. Car blew up down the road. Most novel experience"—Rossey talks like a ten-word message when he gets excited. "Read all about the affair in the morning paper even if they didn't know what they were talking about. I did."

As we passed the front of the local movie theatre I saw that the doors were wide open but the place was empty. Across the street from it a man in shirt-sleeves was dragging a trunk down the front steps of a two-family dwelling. Two women were helping him and several children were adding to the racket with dismal wails.

"Hurry up," the man was shouting. "I'll get the flivver."

As he turned to run toward the tiny garage in the rear I saw that it was Chalmers, the cashier of the Thermopylae National Bank.

"What's up?" I shouted.

He looked around quickly.

"Oh, that you, Hardiman? Good Lord, man, haven't you heard about the anarchists? They're burning the town—"

The rest was lost as he disappeared around the corner of the house. Thick clouds of black smoke rose over the tiled roof.

"He'll never use that car," Rossey said. "His garage is blazing now. Shake it up, Hardiman. We've got to get out of this. If I remember, your house is right around the corner. Let's go there and get your boy away. After that we'll put some territory between us and this place."

At the mention of the boy my wife gave a little shriek and ran in front of us. We struggled after her through a thick blanket of oily smoke that swept over us in gusts. It came from an adjoining street where, I judged, Peterson's garage and repair-shop was burning.

"Listen," Rossey cried. "There's hell to pay around here now but there's worse coming. Hurry around to the house and pack a few things—food, blankets, matches and so forth. Like a camping outfit."

He trotted off down the street and I stood wondering if he or I or everyone had suddenly gone crazy. But from the top of the hill I caught a glimpse of a reddish light from the direction of New York and began to realize the extent of the affair.

I turned into Woodrow Wilson Boulevard.

My house seemed to be untouched. Everything looked just as I had left it after dinner and for a second I had a crazy impulse to take up the open book on the easy-chair on the porch and forget what was going on around me. It is an ostrich instinct in all of us.

Panic is a funny thing. I had not lost much time coming from the Whirling Machine. I doubt if I lost half an hour on the road. But in that short time every house along the street had been hurriedly emptied of its inhabitants. Doors stood open and curtains bellied out through the open windows. Two autos, packed with burned household goods, smouldered in the middle of the Boulevard. All around were strewn boxes and wearing apparel dropped by the stampeding Thermopylaeans.

My wife met me at the door. She was as pale as a sheet.

"Johnny is gone!" she screamed. "He isn't here anywhere!"

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"Easy now," I soothed her. "He can't be far away. Let's inquire."

I heard my name called and looked around to see Mrs. Marlin standing near the hedge that divided their property from ours. Her voice sounded remarkably clear and steady for such a time.

"Looking for your boy, ain't you?"

"Yes. Have you seen him?"

"What with all this pesky nonsense about Bolsheviks and folks running around a body is lucky to see anything," she answered with some warmth. "I ain't going to flatter them by budging an inch. Why, you'd think the end of the world had come. It's these chuckle-headed womenfolk with their nerves on edge from late hours and cocktails that starts these things. I been telling Peter what to expect. It's a visitation for our sins. I'm ready for the call. There's some that ain't so ready—"

"But how about our Johnny? Did you see him?" I broke in.

"Well, I ain't seen the boy myself, but the Whites was running around like a bunch of scared chickens some time back, and I heard them say they would take your Johnny with them and escape. Escape from what? There ain't no escape from your sins nor your conscience—"

I HAD no time to listen to her. I heard Rossey shouting to me from the roadway and raced inside the house to get the stuff he suggested.

"You see Johnny's safe," I told my wife. "Get some food ready."

When I came down with an armful of blankets she had a basket on her arm. We hurried out to the driveway. On any other occasion I would have enjoyed joking with Rossey on the situation I found him in. He was sitting on the front seat of a grocery wagon and holding the reins. It was a plain delivery wagon with a canvas shed and with its old bay horse was a familiar sight at the back doors of Thermopylae. I think it was the only one of its kind in town, most of the tradesmen having automobiles.

"Where'd you get it?" I asked, soberly, dumping my load in the rear.

"Found it standing on a side street," he answered, looking over the horse appraisingly. "Not much of a judge of horseflesh, but he seems tame enough."

"How about a taxi?" I suggested, helping my wife into the rear of the wagon. It had a smell of coffee and spices that one usually associates with vehicles of the kind. "Not that I mind, but for men in our position a grocery wagon makes a poor impression on the neighbors as a means of getting about. Besides a taxi is faster."

"Hardiman," Rossey said coldly, "has it ever occurred to you that for general usefulness and density your head would make an admirable paperweight? Have you seen a gas driven vehicle lately that can be used?"

I climbed to the seat beside him.

"No. Come to think of it they were all on fire."

"Yes!" he snapped. "And every other inflammable thing within a radius of a good many miles is blazing right now. I knew those devils were getting in their work when the gas tank of my car exploded. We think we understand radio activity, don't we? Suppose they are able to throw a spark ten miles. You remember the explosion in Germany I spoke of. You can recall the explosions in the coal mines in Canada and Pennsylvania, too. That is a good bit farther than ten miles."

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He touched the old horse with the whip and we moved slowly through the thickening smoke. A bungalow with a shingle roof was burning brightly at the corner of the street and lit up the way.

"Who are 'they,' Rossey?" I asked, resentfully. "I'm not altogether a fool."

Lashed sharply with the whip, the horse broke into a clumsy gallop, turning the corner and into the Boston Road toward the New York City line. We passed several groups hurrying along and stopped to take Chalmers and his family aboard. They loaded the wagon to its capacity.

When we started again it was at a slower pace. Rossey handed me the reins and lit a broken cigar.

"Bolsheviks," he muttered. "Hopeless!"

He sat silently then while we creaked up the hill and down again and across the bridge at Eastchester creek.

"Hardiman," he spoke up suddenly out of the darkness, "do you remember a recent conversation we had in my observatory?"

"Oh, that astronomy stuff," I answered shortly, nettled by his manner. "What's that got to do with a revolution?"

"Nothing—only this isn't a 'revolutions' as you call it. It's something a great deal more serious than anything that has ever happened to this little old earth of ours."

"Why—what do you mean—worse than a revolution?"

"I mean," he said, impressively, laying a hand on my knee, "I mean that those creatures that landed back in that meadow are the ones men have been expecting but hoping never to see, that they have come to us from the planet Venus, that what they have done so far isn't a marker to what is going to happen by and by.

"Oh, come, Rossey, not as bad as that!"

"I don't mean to be melodramatic about it," he continued, paying no attention to my aimless remark, "but it looks very much as if man—lord of all he surveys—lord of creation as we call him—is pretty close to the end of his reign."

CHAPTER IV

I HEAR SOME STARTLING THINGS

THE wagon jolted over the ruts for some time. Behind me a child whimpered and voices murmured underneath the wagon top. Here and there over the nearby country, the flames of burning buildings flickered in the darkness like the camp fires of a huge, invading army. Rossey seemed to be turning something over and over in his mind.

I watched him uneasily. In spite of his mania for sitting up all night, watching the stars with that spy glass of his, he had always appealed to me as a sane enough person. A good many solid business men with A-1 ratings had hobbies just as harmless. But I wondered if the suddenness of the events of the last few hours had not affected his mind a little.

I decided to avoid any reference to astronomy.

"How did you happen to hit Thermopylae this evening?" I asked. "Were you coming over to my place?"

He remained hunched up in his seat staring gloomily ahead.

"No—not exactly that. I had read of the so-called Belgian heliocopter, as our learned public styled it, and I realized what it was. My dates were a little wrong, though. I figured the Ve-

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nusians, if they ever came, would wait for the moon. They have come sooner than I thought they would."

"The Venusians!" I exclaimed. "I thought you were joshing me a while back, Rossey. Do you really believe that?"

He laughed harshly.

"If you hard-headed business men had raised your eyes from your own petty affairs, you might have seen this thing coming. The idea that creatures on some other planet might be as superior mentally to men as—say, men are to apes—that idea strikes you as ridiculous. The notion that these creatures would, some day sooner or later, decide to visit this planet for purposes of their own, that notion, a logical sequence, has never occurred to you; but it was just as certain to happen as it was certain that the white man's curiosity and greed would reach out for discovery, possession and exploitation of America in the fifteenth century. That was an idea, too, that the sober merchants of the time regarded as absurd.

"For the past generation everything has pointed toward a possible invasion of this planet from a neighboring one. For the past few years everything has pointed toward Venus as the source of the invasion. I tried to explain a few things to you not long ago—things that many thinking men have noticed."

He whipped the grocer's nag into a trot again.

"Well, here they are now, Hardiman, right on top of us without warning. Who and what they are I cannot say. One thing is certain."

He tapped my knee with the butt end of the whip.

"Beings that can cross twenty-six millions of miles of space are vastly ahead of us in brain-power!"

"But what will they do here?" I asked. "Do they want to destroy us altogether? What would that benefit them?"

"That remains to be seen. They had some object in coming. It might be an exploring trip. Then again, they might have a deeper object. Obviously, if we get in their way they will destroy us."

"What! Murder us in cold blood!" I gasped.

"What do you mean by murder?" he countered, quickly. "Do you call it murder to kill a million or so of rabbits or seals or whales? It is hard, naturally, for us to conceive of a reasoning creature other than ourselves because we are the only species that shows intellectual development, to any extent, on this earth. When we think of a reasoning animal we picture a man. We have been so long the rulers of this planet that the idea of a superior creature subjugating us as we subjugated the lower forms of animal life—the idea is abhorrent to us. But it is not inconceivable.

"After all, Hardiman, we are only big fish in a might small pool here. If we get in the way of these creatures from Venus, and they have the power, they will do away with us with the same ruthless ferocity that men have displayed for so many million years against rebellious subjects in the animal kingdom!"

All this did not sound cheerful to me. I thought of my growing business that I had worked so hard to build and of myself and family.

"Maybe you're laying it on too thick," I suggested, trying to be optimistic. "They can't wipe us out altogether, you know. We're not so slow, I guess, ourselves. Our scientists are pretty smart, too. Oh, I guess they'll know how to handle the situation."

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An Iron grip fastened upon me, and I was conducted silently up to the Flower. She reached out curiously and felt of my hair and the roughness of my beard

"We must hope so," he breathed.
But he did not seem very confident.

WHEN I looked around me at the frightened procession along the road and the reddish tinge on the horizon all around I did not feel so confident either.

In a few minutes we reached the outskirts of the Bronx and pulled up under an "L" structure to let a column of soldiers and a line of gun carriages of a peculiar pattern ride by. They were going in the direction from which we had come. There seemed to be a regiment of infantry with them. The men looked worn out and the horses were wet with sweat.

An officer rode up to our wagon and switched a pocket flash light over us.

"You people from Thermopylae?" he inquired.

I nodded.

"How are things up there? We're like blind men here."

Rossey explained the appearance of the Whirling Machine and its effect;

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he mentioned the Venusians, but the other man seemed more interested in the machine.

"That's a new type," he said. "I wonder if it's really armor-plated. The revolutionists seem to have a lot of tricks up their sleeves. They blew up our motor transport back there."

"What's happened in the city?" I inquired.

"As far as I know except for the gas stations and garages they didn't do much damage. Automobile transportation seems to have collapsed. Some one set fire to the motor busses. Funny thing is that, although we know that some one is raising this particular hell all over, no one has been caught in the act. Telephones have broken down somehow. Quite a lot of fires, I hear, in the lower part of the city. We left the armory at the first riot call, but I don't suppose our colonel knows any more than we do what it's all about—we're the 48th Anti-aircraft—trouble seems to be around Thermopylae last we heard. Washington has been going crazy for—but I've got to catch up."

He started off at a brisk trot after the troops, waving his hand to us in informal salute and Rossey whipped up the old horse.

I noticed that no trains were running overhead and that the street lamps were not lit. The only light came from bonfires in the streets and candles and old-fashioned lamps in windows.

I pointed this out to Rossey.

"Paralyzing us! Striking right at the heart of things!" he muttered. "We have been able to stop gas motors at a distance—no mystery about that. Kemenoff, the Russian electrical wizard claimed to be able to do it. It might be unintentional—something about the machine they came in possibly neutralizing certain forms of energy."

Chalmers interrupted to ask that he and his family be set down at a friend's house in the neighborhood.

Rossey tried to persuade him to remain with us.

"There's safety in numbers," he insisted. "Things are going to fall apart for awhile, not only in New York, but throughout the rest of the world. Take my advice and avoid the cities for a while until we find out what to expect. Better come along with us over to my place in Hastings."

But Chalmers was already lifting his children out of the wagon.

"Nonsense, Rossey!" he exclaimed impatiently, when pressed further to remain with us. "I can't have the children sleeping outdoors and the city is the safest place for every one. Besides the government will take care of the people who are making all this trouble. That's what I pay taxes for. Let them worry about it!"

He started off, leading the oldest boy and carrying the youngest in his arms. At a corner, lit by torches held in front of a speech-maker on a broken-down truck, Chalmers looked back and waved his free hand. That was the last I saw of him. He was killed two days later in the collapse of the Municipal Building where, his wife told me later, he had gone to find out why the city departments were not taking the proper steps to preserve order. He had always been a good citizen of the fussing sort.

Rossey struck a cross-street going west and he followed it for some time. Once we passed a large fire burning in the center of the crossing and a crowd gathered around a speaker. I looked back to see a squad of police scattering the crowd with clubs and fists. At the next corner an automobile fire engine, a blackened and scorched hook and ladder, blocked up most of

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the street, so that we had to detour. Several times we passed squads of soldiers and police and there was intermittent shooting going on on either side of us.

"We'd better hurry if we're going to make the Albany Post Road," Rossey said, "for those policemen and soldiers will be holding up traffic. They will put the city under martial law—if there is any system left at all. I hope the National Guard will at least keep order."

The smoke blackened ruins of autos dotted the way here and there. In the shadows of the houses moved other shadows, furtively. Sounds of shouting and crashing glass came from the Southern Boulevard when we passed its intersection. Some kind of riot was in progress.

Later the old horse shied violently at something in the road and I was afraid he had broken one of the filmsy shafts. I saw that the hopeless thing in the road was a dead man.

"Starting already," Rossey said, grimly. "With the end perhaps in sight they waste no time getting at each other's throats."

"What do you intend to do?" I asked.

"Hastings first," he said. "Got to get my data and the use of my telescope. Then Washington. The steam trains ought to be running for a few days yet. I've got to be there in person. There aren't six men in the United States tonight that know what is going on. I happen to be one of them. Two or three others may be there and if the Federal government will listen to us—"

He gestured with the ragged whip. "I have a sort of an idea what these Venusian invaders are up to. If I'm right, there's not a moment to lose. I'd give a lot for two minutes' conversation with three or four men I know."

"With whom?"

"One is the leading geologist of this country; you don't know him and never heard of him; he's not a popular-lecture type, but a man who knows. Another is a friend of mine who worked quietly but efficiently for the gas defense organization during the world war, and invented the powerful lethal gas we never used. Another is Weintraub, the chemist, and another is Pierre Trabre."

"The French astronomer! Quite a combination, Rossey," I commented with feeble enthusiasm. "Sort of mixed, though. Geologists, chemists and astronomers. I should think we'd need generals right now and guns."

"Generals!" he snorted. "These are the generals we need. Our only hope lies in the men of science."

WE PASSED a deserted newsstand, and I jumped down and secured a copy of the Evening Star. By the light of matches we examined it as we continued on our way.

It was an early edition, probably on the newsstands before transportation stopped, and of course made no mention of the last few hours. The first page was devoted to a million-dollar bequest from one of our rich men to a university; some racy scandal revealed in a popular divorce suit; and various items that had been of stupendous interest twelve hours before.

I was about to toss it into the street, when Rossey pointed to an item below the latest sport news. It was headed "Missing Balloon Found?" and read:

By Evening Star Radio. Rio de Janeiro, June 6. Messages are being received here from the interior reporting a strange balloon which has appeared close to the

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Peruvian border, near the Tarjuaca River, early this morning and is thought to be the captive balloon that broke loose from its moorings during the recent Brazilian army maneuvers.

If so, it raises the interesting question as to the length of time such craft can remain aloft, as it was conjectured that the one in question had long since come to rest in the jungle. In other respects, it does not answer the description of the lost aircraft.

Natives describe the one seen over Tarjuaca as silver-tinted and shaped like a top. Further details are lacking, as telegraphic communication, always poor in the interior, has for some reason been completely cut off.

Rossey tapped the paragraph with his finger and looked at me through narrowed lids. Then he blew out the match he had been holding, leaving us in darkness again, and chirruped to the tired horse. We both realized what that dispatch meant. There were two of the machines on earth.

It was a dark, moonless night, now that we had gone beyond the city limits, and I could hardly see three yards ahead. Presently we struck the Albany Post Road and turned north along the river front.

"Of course," I said at last, "there's no way of telling what is going on in Europe right now. They may be there also."

"Perhaps," he said wearily.

The grocer's horse, which had been gradually slowing up, stumbled twice while Rossey was talking. The latter peered into the shadows by the roadside and pulled up.

"You people better camp here for the night," he said. "You can sleep in the wagon. I may be wrong in my idea, but if I were you I'd avoid getting under any sort of roof tonight."

"How about you?" I asked.

"I'm going ahead. There will be no sleep for me until I am on my way to Washington. There used to be a couple of bicycles up at the house. I'll use one to get me to the river and find some way to get across to Jersey and look for a train, if there are any running the way I am going."

Neither my wife nor I got much sleep after he left. She did not mention our Johnny again, and I knew she was worrying about his safety and trying to pretend she thought it was all right and that he was safe. I figured he was with the Whites and in good hands.

I discovered that a business man of thirty-seven, weighing close to two hundred pounds, is unfitted physically to sleep in light delivery wagons, so I wrapped a blanket around me and tried to snatch some sleep propped against a billboard by the roadside.

My mind was busy figuring on what was happening all over the world and what was going to happen that had scared Rossey so much. The stars came out after a while. There seemed to be just as many of them as usual. I wished then that I knew more about them and wondered what Rossey had meant about the catastrophe that was coming our way, and wished that I had asked him more questions. I tried to figure out what the creatures from Venus would look like. Rossey said birds, I remembered.

At any rate, they would have as much sympathy for us as we would have for a bunch of strange goblins.

I fell asleep and dreamed of fighting slimy creatures in airships. I was engaged in a thrilling battle with a Venusian above the clouds and had managed to upset the bath-tub he was driving by ramming it with a grocery wagon. We fell together through clouds of burning bathroom catalogues and directories of plumbing supply houses, and I awoke to find it was broad daylight and my wife was shaking me.

"I declare, Frank, I think you'd sleep

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the day through. How can you sleep so soundly with all these things happening?"

She probably had not slept at all, so I maintained a charitable silence while we made a meal of a couple of sandwiches and a stale bottle of milk. I found the horse was helplessly lame, so we packed up the few belongings we had and started for Hastings.

The road remained quiet. No motor cars appeared. But it was different at the Hastings railroad station. The commuter was a hardy animal in those days. Nothing unless it was the crack of doom would keep him from getting his morning train. There were no trains running, but the commuters thronged the platforms, arguing in groups. I would like to have stopped to listen, for there were several novel theories going the rounds of that excited crowd. But we had no time to gossip.

Mrs. Rossey met us at the door of her home. She was looking worried and thin.

"Come right in," she said, kissing my wife. "We're all camping out these days. Rossey left for Washington to help out. He wants us all ready to move in a day or two. Isn't it terrible, Mr. Hardiman?"

She led my wife inside to a much-needed sleep. I strolled to the gate.

"Hello, there, Hardiman."

White was standing in the road with his wife. He walked toward me along the drive, firing questions.

"This Rossey's place? How'd you get here? Say, did you hear about the gas works in Mount Vernon blowing up?"

I put in a question myself.

"Where's Johnny? I thought he was with you."

They both looked blank. White shook his head.

"No. He left us as we were ready to leave. He was going down to meet you and Mrs. Hardiman at the airplane in Hank's meadow. He started that way, anyhow."

I know now what it means when I hear of people being struck speechless. For about a minute I just stared at him, figuring about little Johnny in the hands of those monsters back in Thermopylae. Then I came to life. I can think quickly when I have to.

"Listen!" I whispered, grabbing his arm. "Tell the folks—tell my wife that you brought the boy here, and that I took him down to the village for a couple of days. Tell her I did not want to wake her up to tell her about it."

I ran down the path to the barn. I recollected Rossey saying he had a bicycle hidden around somewhere. In another second I was wheeling it down the path at a run and had climbed into the seat.

"Hey!" White shouted as I rode by him. "Where you off to?"

He stepped out of the way just in time. I hadn't ridden a bicycle in a good many years and was never graceful at it.

"Back to Thermopylae."

He shouted something else, but I was through the gate and too busy trying to keep the machine on the high-road to listen. I could not even take my mind off my work long enough to look back.

I might have saved myself a lot if I had.

CHAPTER V

A WORLD IN DANGER

OF COURSE we all know more about what was going on during the couple of days between the landing of the Whirling Machines and the first

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big crash—we know more about this now than we did then.

Plenty of lectures have been given and volumes written on the subject from Castleton's "Venus, the Destroyer," to the voluminous reports from the Planetary Institute, in Washington, which reports have been the means of spreading knowledge among laymen concerning the important item of just who and what our neighbors are in the heavens. But this interest is recent. At the time of the Venusian invasion most of us knew about as much concerning the thing that had hit this old Mother Earth, as a colony of ants scurrying around, would know concerning the causes of their nest being wrecked.

We know now that only two Whirling Machines hit the earth.

One was our Thermopylae visitor, and the other was the one mentioned in that vague dispatch in the Evening Star—a suggestive name, by the way. The latter machine remained only a day or two on Brazilian soil and appears to have done no damage except to villages of neighboring Indians.

Several of the latter were carried off by the Venusians. The object of that expedition is not clear yet; so many changes have taken place since that time in South America that it is doubtful if the matter will be cleared up for some time. At any rate, that Whirling Machine left rather suddenly.

But as every one knows, the Whirling Machine that landed on our Westchester soil did not arrive to collect specimens of humanity only. They did that, too, but they had another object besides satisfying their curiosity concerning this bright star in their heaven, which was our hapless earth.

It was Rossey who first opened the eyes of the scientific world to what was really happening. Others knew, but he was on the job first and broke the news to the assembled Smithsonian Institute and the rest of them, the day he got to Washington, informing them very emphatically that unless they worked fast this world that had rolled along for so many ages peaceably was doomed to sudden extinction in a decidely unpleasant manner.

They did not take in the whole idea in the beginning.

Rossey told me about it after everything was over, one day when we were watching a gang of negro workmen salvaging building material from the débris that marked the site of the busiest section of lower Broadway.

"This," he said, waving his hand toward the half submerged heaps of rubbish and twisted columns—"this is nothing to what it might have been. It was only by the narrowest margin we got by. It was close."

It appears to have been difficult work convincing the wise men of that assemblage that day. Most of the savants had come hurriedly several hundred miles. A good many were too far away when the transportation and communications began to fail, to get in touch with Washington after President Penrose issued his startling proclamation.

They suspected, too, I imagine, that some crank had inoculated the President of the United States and the Chief of Staff and the Cabinet and the scientists with his own foolishness. One venerable doctor of something or other —I have forgotten his name—poo-poohed the whole thing.

"Venusians!" he snorted contemptuously. "Come all the way from the planet—twenty millions of miles or so —to raise Cain here! Ridiculous idea! What next, I wonder?"

He bolted the meeting then and there

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and refused to have anything more to do with it. Later on he proved conclusively several times in public lectures on street corners—those were queer days following the coming of the Venusians, with every one more or less mad—that the visitors were not from Venus at all, and that the Whirling Machine had come out of the center of the earth where another race of creatures, something like salamanders, existed. He disappeared after the crash.

But the others listened to Rossey with respect. He had all the data at his finger tips and drove every argument home with facts and proofs that no one could very well ignore.

I CAN imagine nervous, energetic Rossey pounding his fists on the table and making the sweeping gestures he used to emphasize his theories with at Hastings.

"There I was before the best men in their line in the land," he told me, "white-headed fellows, with all the letters of the alphabet after their names, and keen-eyed youngsters who had already made their marks in the scientific world. I had to show them.

"Eventually they got my drift. You remember, Hardiman, all the arguments I advanced to you one day to prove that Venus had a freezing temperature on one side part of their year, and a red-hot climate on the other side. Naturally I did not have to explain all that to those men. But when it came to my theory I had my hands full."

Gradually, he said, the assembled scientists grasped the truth, and the questions came thick and fast. What data had he to check up the facts he gave? How many million horse-power did he think the Venusians had provided for? Might they have come from Mars and not from Venus at all? How could any creatures execute such a gigantic engineering feat as his engineering called forth? There were more questions about the thickness of the earth's crust, the nearness of the moon on a certain date, and other questions which, until Rossey explained to me, seemed to have little bearing on the subject.

Pierson, the elderly physicist, suggested plaintively that no creatures could be so heartless as to wipe out a world teeming with living creatures, for purely selfish reasons.

"What! Do you mean to say that in order to carry out their fiendish plans these hobgoblins would destroy us?"

"Exactly," Rossey had replied. "And with about as much compunction as you would feel in slaughtering millions of disease germs to save one human life. It's in your point of view. We mean absolutely nothing to these beings from our neighboring planet. It is a war to the death, with no quarter on either side. They are here, and will either accomplish what they came for or we will destroy them. There can be no half measures about it."

It was war. That afternoon the President issued a second proclamation, calling on every able-bodied man and woman to aid their fellow humans in ridding the earth of the Venusians. There was no way of getting word to Europe under several weeks. Later, Europe sent her help. But that was after the first shock of the 17th of June. And that was almost too late in this one-sided war.

I am going too fast, though. All that was later.

Pushing that bicycle along the Albany Post Road that morning, I knew nothing of what was going on. I had only a dim idea from what Rossey had let drop that we were in for a bad

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time. What the Whirling Machine had brought to earth I did not know.

I was too busy trying to keep in the middle of the road to have much time to worry about anything else. I was not thinking of the Venusians at all just then. I had turned into Two Hundred and Tenth Street and was deeply engrossed in making a sharp turn around a deserted automobile and avoiding an iron pillar of the subway elevated structure that seemed to be trying to get in my way, when I found myself lying on the ground, entangled in the broken spokes of the bicycle. I took a quick look around to see what I had slipped on, and then scrambled to my feet. Several men, their faces white and their eyes staring upward, rushed to the protection of the elevated pillars and clung to them. I looked up.

Overhead the wall of the nearest building seemed to bend out all of a piece and hesitate for a fraction of a second like a breaking comber. It fairly quivered in its whole nine-story length of brick and stone. I clung to the iron pillar, itself swaying drunkenly, and shut my eyes.

There came a series of minor crashes far off like distant thunder. A scattering volley of bricks rattled against the iron overhead. The next instant came a roar like an ocean breaking loose, and I stopped thinking for a while.

CHAPTER VI

I MEET THE VENUSIANS

IT WAS on the 17th of June that our planet received that terrific preliminary, warning jolt that showed the Venusians were getting in their work. At the same instant every city and town within a radius of twenty miles of their landing place was laid in ruins.

The shock was felt all over the world, and in some cases slight damage was done as far away as London and Paris. In the former place St. Paul's, long known to be insecure, was a total loss. The Eiffel tower in Paris crashed to the ground. Chicago was partly destroyed; Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, and other cities felt the shock and lost some of their skyscrapers, but otherwise escaped the fate of New York.

But the latter city was annihilated. The Woolworth Building crashed down first, according to one survivor, followed immediately by near-by tall buildings of the financial district. The bridges across the East River slid into the water almost noiselessly by comparison. Most of the great edifices of the metropolis collapsed like piles of dishes when a tablecloth is jerked from underneath them.

It was a nightmare of destruction. One second the sun was reflected from the countless roofs and orderly squares of a thousand places that were the culmination of mankind's hundreds of years of painful building. The next minute or two an aerial observer would have had difficulty seeing through the clouds of dust that hovered over the ruins.

It came suddenly, unexpectedly. The greatest city of the Western Hemisphere received a smashing knockout blow from an invisible hand and went down for the count, carrying with it most of its vast population.

On that 17th of June the civilized world stopped like a delicate watch struck by a hammer.

Any boy in the sixth grade knows that. I only mention that date particularly because I figure I must have lain unconscious in the ruins for a whole day following the catastrophe. In spite of the fact that I kept a fairly accurate

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record of the days in my mind—even among the Venusians—I seem to have lost a day in my reckoning.

I seemed to come to life abruptly without experiencing any semi-conscious state.

One moment I was cowering beneath the wave of brick and steel that was curving over me; the next moment I was lying alone on some splintered wood, in a dead silence, with a steel girder across my right foot and the dazzling glare of the sun in my eyes. Stabs of pain shot through my aching head. I never realized before how thirsty a man can be.

For a few moments I lay trying to collect my throbbing senses and watching the fireworks that seemed to revolve around that burning noontime sun overhead. Then I sat up, twisting around on my elbow, very dizzy and sick, and feeling as though I had just finished a round with a world's champion who had forgotten to take the horseshoes out of his gloves.

I got uncertainly to my feet. As far as I could see in any direction, I was surrounded by a rolling desert of broken brick and plaster with little hills where parts of stone foundations still held together beneath the piled-up débris. Here and there a crumpled steel skeleton twisted up above the ruins.

It reminded me of pictures of war-time France, only those pictures usually showed villages, whereas this desolation was, only two days before, one of the world's greatest cities, with crowds and apartment houses and theatres and stores full of life and rush and bustle.

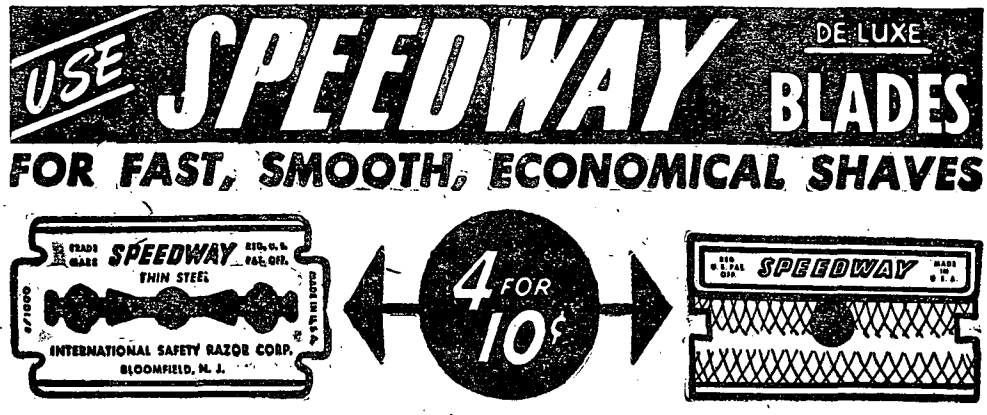
Now it looked like nothing so much as a junk dealer's back yard.

Near me was a woman's hat, sadly battered, a crumpled bath-tub—it made me homesick to see it—the top of a yellow-and-black taxicab half buried under a cigar store sign; a steam radiator and a piano speared on the end of a broken iron column. The place had the unearthly hush of a graveyard at midnight.

I was almost afraid to move around and make a noise. Very faintly, every few seconds, I could hear a dull rumble from the south. When you consider that the rumble was caused by the shifting of the ruins down around Wall Street, ten miles or so away, it will give an idea of the weird silence.

I staggered across the litter to what appeared to be a man's spring overcoat thrown in a heap, and sat down on it. Then I jumped up. There was a dead man inside the coat.

A foot sticking up from behind a pile of broken lath showed me where another was lying. Here and there I



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could make out others, some of them women.

I began to get an idea of the magnitude of the disaster.

But the main thing for me just then, I thought, was to get away. I felt that I could not get away from that city of death quickly enough and out into the green country where perhaps there were still men and women.

I STARTED over the jumbled-up heaps carefully, jumping awkardly every time my foot started a landslide of brick. Once I heard a faint cry as if some poor devil were pinned underneath, but I was too weak and sick myself to stop and investigate. I wanted to find water.

By and by I came to what had been a garage. It had been strongly built, and the roof still held here and there, though it sagged warningly. There was plenty of water there. It was at the bottom of a steep street, quite a pool showing where the water had collected when the mains burst. I fell into it as gladly as a traveler in the desert does when he finds an oasis. The coolness of that artificial pond refreshed me wonderfully.

I kept on toward what I thought would be the west. Five minutes later I was fishing with a long stick in the ruins of a delicatessen store, at the risk of being buried alive beneath the threatening walls. That enterprise netted me half a loaf of bread, two cans of kippered herring, and a smoked tongue. More was in sight, but the view I got of the lately deceased proprietor took most of my ambition away.

I must have looked like a fine specimen of a hobo as I sat in an open space, devouring that stuff. I felt it. Human nature has its funny twists. Even there, the only man in what appeared to be a lifeless, ruined world, in spite of my famished condition, I felt a little foolish to be squatting on the ground chewing on the end of a loaf of bread. It was undignified. It takes time to get back to cave days and not a policeman in sight when you are accustomed to the five fifteen train and Sunday golf. I had a lot to learn.

Well, during the next few months I learned it.

When I had finished what I could of the victuals I dropped the rest into my pocket. I might have several days' travel before I discovered anybody alive in this waste. I sat for awhile trying to figure things out. Without a doubt, there had been a terrible world calamity.

New York was done for. The survivors must have fled to the open country, where it was safer. That explained the silence and loneliness. They probably took the injured with them. But what caused the earthquake—for that is what it seemed to be—in the first place?

I bounded to my feet as a cold nose touched the back of my neck and something breathed softly on me. In my sudden fright I must have stepped back ten feet at least before I caught myself and croaked out a relieved laugh. Then I wiped my forehead with the back of my hand.

It was only a sad-looking dog. I had been so wrapped up in my speculations that he had crept up to me unnoticed. He waved a draggled tail in a tentative sort of way and eyed me closely, waiting for me to wigwag a friendly signal back. I cut off a piece of smoked tongue with my penknife and held it out to him.

"Here, Fido!"

When he saw the meat he snapped it up with all haste. In his hurry he

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seemed to think my fingers were included in the offer, but I took them out of his mouth again. No use pampering a dog.

After that we became great friends. He was company for me. It would have taken a better man than me to tell just what kind or how many kinds of a dog he was, but I valued his society just then. He made the desert of brick and stone less lonely. Together we scrambled along over the heaps of débris and around tottering walls, keeping the sun over my left shoulder in the hope of striking the Hudson River to the west.

It was hard going and we got twisted around sometimes, but by dark we reached clearer ground where the ruins were farther apart. By that time I had shed my coat, was covered by plaster and brick dust, and was ready to call it a day. I was puzzled at not finding the river; but considering that, in my ignorance, I was going east, that fact is not strange.

Still no signs of life. It began to look as if the hound and I were alone in a very dismal world. The thought of the possible fate of my wife and little Johnny was a dark cloud over my tired brain.

I stopped to rest in a broken chair against a section of the wall.

"Cheer up, old boy," I said, scratching the dog's one good ear. "The folks are all right, I guess, somewhere. Let's make camp."

He wagged his tail and sniffed around as I dragged a few boards against the wall for a shelter in case it rained. What I made did not look like a human habitation, and even the dog eyed it suspiciously before he crawled in with me. By the time he had circled around a few times the way all careful dogs do and walked over me and under me to investigate the place, we were ready to sleep.

EVENTUALLY he settled down for the night and I listened to the rumbling sounds far off. Once or twice before I drifted off to sleep the dog raised himself slowly beside me and stood rigidly alert. His hair bristled under my hand, and I could feel my own hair tickling the neckband of my shirt in sympathy. Whatever he saw or heard seemed to make him uneasy and he would growl a little in his throat before he would settle down.

I could hear nothing, but had a sort of nervous, jumpy feeling that there were things crawling around. Every one who has slept outdoors in the woods has had that feeling at first. It wears off.

Through the cracks between the boards I could see the stars blinking away as calmly as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened to our little world. I thought of what Rossey had told me one night.

We were on his back porch. It was before he made his money and built that observatory. He had a pair of German field glasses he picked up in a second-hand place. Even then he was a "nut" on astronomy. He had been telling me something about a "nova," which he said was a new star, that had lately appeared. He had shoved the glasses in my hand.

"See if you can see it," he suggested.

But of course I could not. I never could see anything in those days.

"That pinpoint of light," he went on, "is a blazing world bigger than our own. Something went wrong, and it has crashed into another planet. Strange, isn't it, to think that what we are looking at happened two thousand odd years ago? By tomorrow that light

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will begin to fade. In a few weeks it will die out, according to human eyes. As far as we can see, that crash of two worlds happened only a few days ago, but those stars are so far off that astronomers figure the light takes two thousand years to reach us.

"That cataclysm we think we are watching must have occurred about the time of Christ. Who knows but it had a connection some way with that terrible event? The Bible says the veil of the Temple was rent. Perhaps there was a crashing of planets, too, and we are only beginning to see the results. Eh, Hardiman?"

And so on while I yawned.

It didn't seem so outlandish now, with the views of the greatest city in the world around me. I felt a little scared by the immensity of it.

I tried to pick out Venus against the Western sky, and wondered what was waiting for us. These Venusians were certainly making a wreck of things. Was there a Supreme Being watching over the universe? Were these Venusians His chosen people, instead of ourselves? Were we only second-raters, after all—thinking apes, as some of the highbrows tell us, big fish in a little pond until a bigger fish appeared?

Gradually I fell asleep.

I was having a lot of trouble making up the new inventory for the firm of Hardiman and Berlin. As fast as I got the bath tubs in order the piles of sanitary wash basins would tumble down, and when I turned to sort them out again the portable showers would fall down and I had to pack them back in their boxes. That idiot next door kept shouting all the time and beating time on a boiler. It's a wonder the landlord allowed it. He disturbed me so much I dropped my pencil and had to fish around under the piles of galvanized iron pipe in the back of the shop to recover it.

There was the dog, too. I wondered who let him in. We never had a dog around the place before. He sat on my desk in front of me with his ragged tail in the ink and barked in my face. Berlin's dog, probably. He ought to have kept him at home.

I got up to tell him so, struck my head against the board over my lean-to, and woke up. Daylight streamed through the openings.

The dog was barking furiously outside, giving quick glances over his shoulder to attract my attention.

I crawled out on my hands and knees. I was stiff in every muscle.

"Oh, there you are! I thought there was some one inside. Better hustle along with us if you want to get away. We're about the last."

I looked up into the unshaven face of a middle-aged man partly dressed in the remnants of a white Palm Beach suit. When I say "remnants," I mean there was more man showing than suit. He looked as if he had been to a bargain sale—one of the kind held the first Monday in May—and been snowed under. His eyes were haunted, he was out of breath and looked over his shoulder as if he expected to see a ghost in broad daylight. Behind him two women and a child leaned exhausted against a broken board fence and watched us dully.

I grabbed his hand enthusiastically.

"The last of what?" I inquired. I was still sleepy.

"Bucyrus." It was a town close by Thermopylae. "We're on our way to join the rest of the lucky ones that got away early—if there are any left."

"What happened to Bucyrus, then?"

He jerked his hand impatiently away.

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"Are you coming? There's no time to fool away. Come or stay. If you stay, you'll soon know what happened to Bucyrus."

This seemed to arouse his mind to the need for haste. We limped rapidly away to the women. Hastily they clambered over the piles of débris.

"Insects," I muttered to my dog, as I fed him scraps of meat. "That's what Rossey said. Who's afraid of a bunch of insects?" And I really thought so at the time. Ten years at a desk hadn't sapped the muscular strength gained in my years as a working plumber. I felt equal to handling myself in an emergency.

WE STARTED out across the heaps of building material in what I guessed to be the general direction of Thermopylae. It was fairly hard work climbing up and down brick piles and under steel girders and beams. We made less than two miles an hour. Once we passed two dogs worrying something half buried under the débris, and my friend kept closer to me for awhile with his tail tucked between his legs.

Off on the horizon I thought I saw a glistening something suspended in the air, but I could not be sure. It was a hazy, hot day and my vision was poor. The thing in the sky reminded me of the Whirling Machine.

We had reached another open space where the houses had been detached when suddenly the dog began to bark furiously. I heard a scrambling sound close at hand and two men appeared around the corner of a caved-in frame house.

They were stumbling along at a half run, heads drooping and rolling wearily and their breath sobbing through set teeth. They looked neither to the right nor to the left, but kept straight on by us. I have seen Marathon runners at the end of a race in better condition. They were running like frightened rabbits.

I stepped out to head them off.

"Hey, what's up?"

The nearest gave a scared jump and stumbled over an obstruction in the road, then picked himself up hastily and rushed after his companion.

The dog was acting strangely. He paid no attention to the man who had just passed. Instead, he directed his quivering nose toward the north, whining and growling gently to himself. Then he slunk between my legs and refused to budge. It was a plain case of funk. I was puzzled.

It must have been contagious, for during the next few seconds, for the life of me, I was mortally afraid to look around, though I could hear distinctly heavy breathing and the stumbling of something heavy coming toward me over the uneven ground. It was a panicky fear similar to the one that attacks the best of men at times, making them refuse to face the source of their fear, or makes a woman pull the covers over her head in bed at night when she hears a noise.

Then I whirled around and had my first view of a Venusian.

At first it was the man that attracted my attention. He leaned against a heap of masonry three or four yards away and gasped like a man at the end of a race. As a matter of a fact he was. His ribs showed through the tattered shirt he wore. Saliva drooled from his unshaven lips. His eyes had a wild, hunted look.

All these details flashed in front of me like a broken section of a movie film. Then I felt something drawing my eyes against my will away from the man and I looked into the coldest,

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cruelest pair of eyes I had ever seen.

That was all I could see at first—just those lifeless, cold eyes that seemed to look right through my brain and out the back of my head. They seemed to turn me inside out and I felt as if they were disappointed in what they found. I never thought, at first, of escaping. I just stood stock still and shivered and tried to break away from that icy grip. My dog whined fretfully and cowered against my legs.

Did you ever stop to wonder what the jungle gorilla's ideas are the first time he meets man face to face? What makes a huge beast like that fall into a panic of rage and fear? Is it the power of a superior will or the fear the animal has of the superior, cold intelligence behind the man's little eyes?

I do not know the reasons for it. Rossey said afterward that the Venusians are away ahead of us in mesmeric powers. Maybe so. All I know is that I stood just as helplessly before that creature as if I were a cornered rabbit.

As far as outward appearance went, the Venusian was a man—only more so. He appeared to be about six feet two or three, with skin of a pallid white and was wonderfully proportioned physically. Without giving the impression of heaviness he radiated muscular power.

Every movement brought a ripple of muscles beneath the hairless skin. Except for a pair of sandals shod with some copper-colored substance, a kind of breech-clout of gold-threaded cloth about his waist and a metal circlet binding his jet-black hair, which flowed over his shoulders, he was quite naked—and unashamed.

He looked like one of the statues, made by the Greeks or Romans, that I saw once in the Metropolitan Museum and could have given cards and spades to any movie hero in point of looks. Alongside of him the handsomest lifeguard that ever posed on the beach would have looked like Charlie Chaplin at his worst.

For all that, as the saying is, he did not make a home run with me. There was a dead look in those greenish eyes that frightened me.

I thought of what Rossey said about the Venusians being birds and laughed—a little hysterically I guess. That broke the spell. The man near by started, groped about him for a moment with outstretched hands, and started away at a stumbling trot.

THE Venusian did not move, but turned his eyes from me and followed the movements of the other man. Then, without moving a muscle of that dead white face he took a thin, silvery rod from the breech-clout and held it on the level with his eyes and pointed toward the refugee.

There came a blinding flash, and the man tumbled in a heap and lay still.

"You—you've killed him!" I cried, horror-stricken.

He made no sound nor seemed to have heard me, but walked slowly around me seeming to measure me with his eyes. As he came closer in his tour the dog growled and made a vicious snap at the Venusian's heels. It was the poor animal's last snap.

Reaching down quickly, the Venusian grasped the dog by the hind legs and swung him with no apparent effort over his head.

"Here! Stop that!" I shouted, and tried to grab his arm.

With the slightest of motions the Venusian pushed me away, and I found myself sprawling among the brick-bats and feeling fairly well bruised by the

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contact, ten feet away. I began to respect the strength of those hidden muscles. With a final whirl the dog was hurled over the near-by ruins and disappeared.

The Venusian pointed to me. I waited for the fatal rod to point to me. Instead the Venusian pointed again in front of him toward Thermopylae, and I understood I was to follow him.

In that way I finished my journey to Thermopylae.

CHAPTER VII

INSIDE THE WHIRLING MACHINE

SPELLBOUND with wonder at the things around me, I stood aside from the hurrying turmoil and gaped around like a farmer's boy at his first circus.

I stood on a kind of metal platform where the Venusian had left me. A ghastly blue light radiating from a huge tube that rose vertically beside me showed me openings on either side from a main central shaft. The platform was at the bottom of this shaft. One hundred feet above me, or the height of a ten-story building, a gleam of sunlight showed the upper opening of the shaft.

Through one of the openings at my side I could see a compartment containing densely packed and intricate machinery shining like polished silver and moving noiselessly. In another nearby compartment inviting-looking couches, covered with cloth woven of gaily colored birds' feathers, were ranged in a circle. Up and down the central shaft glistened naked forms that seemed to float.

I was inside the Whirling Machine.

Outside lay the blackened ruins of Thermopylae and the man-made world of the twentieth century—a trifle out of joint of course, but still my world. Inside was a new world in every sense of the word. I still did not even know whether these creatures used language to convey thought, or whether they ate, slept, loved and hated like humans or were soul-less animals made in the forms of supermen. However, I was soon to know.

A white figure descended the shaft and dropped lightly beside me. It was the Venusian who had captured me. He was holding his hand on a glowing metal cylinder, attached to and sliding along a thin wire of the same metal which ran to the top of the shaft. I noted several similar wires on either side of the shaft. It was by this means the Venusians had apparently been flying up and down the shaft.

He took my arm, placed my right hand on the cylinder beside his and I seemed to float. I had an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach for a second and then found myself at the top of the shaft with the Venusian pushing my feet onto a landing platform. He took my arm again and guided me through a narrow opening.

It was a room about thirty feet square and utterly bare except for a large globe suspended in the center peculiarly marked. Against the wall another tall Venusian stood, and beside him a man of my own species. The latter, trembling, twisted an old felt hat in his hands and looked about him with large, frightened, black eyes.

Looking at me his swarthy face lit up:

"Hey, boss!" he said plaintively. "What t'ell 'smatter this people? I don't wanna stay here. Thees tough guys they burn up my town, smasha my boot-black stand, no wears any clothes—"

"I don't want to be here either, Tony. But I guess we're in for it. They're a

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rough crowd of bimbos if you ask me."

"Sure, boss. This big guy he grab me. Stronga man. I tell him American citizen. No war any more. He say nottin' only push!"

"S-sh, Tony!" I warned him.

Coming through the doorway was a most unattractive individual. He had the greenish eyes of the Venusians and their pallid skin, but otherwise looked like a caricature of a college professor. About five feet high, with spindly legs and a little, round torso, he had a head that would have taken a number twelve derby. I should say it was about as big as an association football. But much more useful I discovered later. The Venusians did not pay too much respect to him, only extending their palms in an odd gesture of salutation which he answered very humbly.

I afterwards found out he was one of their kind but set apart from generation to generation as a memory expert or rather a walking encyclopedia of knowledge that the Venusians themselves did not bother to encumber their own minds with. They do not use writing. He had been detailed by the Supreme Council of Venus, as they called their ruling body, to attend this expedition. He was subordinate, of course, to the Flower of Gold, of whom I shall write later.

He shambled into the room on his bandy legs and beckoned to me and the Italian to come closer.

For two hours we went through the strangest examination I ever experienced. First of all we were measured with a long rod for heighth and breadth and then the circumferences of our heads, length of noses, diameter of chests, and every other conceivable measurement taken with a pair of calipers. He made no notes. Then, with a wax tablet on which he scratched crude drawings of different objects, he tried to get an idea of our speech. Thus arose the first difficulty.

He had drawn a picture of a lake and made a gesture of drinking. I had answered all the questions, but this seemed to remind the Italian at my side of something.

"Aqua!" he blurted out.

"Water!" I suggested.

The Venusian looked mystified. He tried other words on my companion and found they disagreed with mine. But he was quick to catch on. He led the way to the globe in the center of the room and placed my hand on it. It was a relief map of the earth. I pointed to myself and put my finger on North America, then to the Italian and pointed out Italy.

The Venusian gabbled rapidly to the tall Venusians, who answered in the musical sing-song they used very sparingly. In the whole time I was in the whirling machine I seldom heard them utter a word.

AFTER that the Italian was led away and I spent some time showing the big-headed Venusian where the different races and nations of mankind lived. As geography was never my strong point I am afraid I put the Laplanders in Egypt and distributed other races rather carelessly. But I was there to give information and did not hesitate for an answer right or wrong. He swallowed everything, hook, line and sinker. Asked about my own profession I intimated as well as I could that I was a sort of exalted ruler in Thermopylae, and that satisfied him too. I've never found that among strangers it pays to cheapen one's self.

He stumped me once, though. He drew a twisted hieroglyphic on the pad and looked at me questioningly. I studied it for some time and turned the tablet upside down without making it

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out. It looked like a trail made by an inky fly across a sheet of paper. It might have been Chinese. I shook my head.

Rossey has a theory that the Venusian wanted to know the whereabouts of a forgotten, prehistoric people—Egyptians or something like that. He says it is quite possible that the Venusians made a former visit here thousands of years ago.

"Perhaps some ancient civilization," he insists, "before the first Pharaoh saw the light of day. That would account for the old tradition that Venus represented the goddess of beauty. It is a startling thought." I was full of startling thoughts, too, but they mainly concerned myself, and the most startling at the time was whether I was to be killed or kept alive. I motioned to my mouth to show I was hungry.

The big-head motioned to me to follow him. In an inner chamber he motioned me to a couch, and when I had seated myself produced a glass tube, sealed at both ends and full of a light green fluid, and three round loaves. He opened the tube by the simple process of digging the soft wax out with his forefinger and left me.

The loaves were slightly sweet and tasted more like a heavy cake than a bread. The wine, or whatever it was, was almost tasteless but warming and soothing, and I lay back on the soft couch in a dreamless sleep.

When I awoke I found the professor seated beside me, holding his hand over the beating of my heart and counting to himself. He was certainly a glutton for knowledge.

"Look here," I protested. "Don't I ever get a chance to rest? Am I on exhibition all the time?"

Men with tough beards—tender skin!
Use these new Thin Gillettes—and grin!
You look well-groomed—shave in a flash.
At four for ten you save real cash!
Top quality at rock-bottom price
SAVINGS
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
4 for 10c
8 for 19c
The Thin Gillette Blade Is Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

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He calmly proceeded to examine my hands and face, seemingly greatly interested in the growth of beard that was sprouting on my chin. The Venusians, as I have said, have no notion of whiskers.

The tall Venusian that had captured me stepped quietly into the room and pointed at me, uttering one single word.

Big-head tugged at my arm.

"Where to? Where to?" I motioned, wagging my hands.

He hastily drew a picture of a woman seated on a high chair and several men grouped below her.

"The boss, eh? And a female boss! Well! Well!"

But that was only to impress them. I did not feel jaunty.

We seemed to go into the bowels of that machine for some time from one passage to another before my two Venusians stopped and pushed me gently ahead of them into a brightly lit room.

Seated in a wide arm-chair, raised slightly above the level of the floor and covered with red cloth that made a striking contrast to her pale, glistening body, was the most beautiful female in human likeness I had ever seen.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLOWER OF GOLD

AS THE only man who ever came out of the clutches of the Venusians alive, I have often been asked to give a detailed story of my experiences in the whirling machine—what I saw and heard and some idea of the life of the Venusians themselves. The idea seems to be that I must have a clear, day-by-day recollection of those several weeks.

But I am not Rossey. I made no notes, and things are confused in my mind with things I probably dreamed of and other things that were just hearsay from fellow-prisoners. Then again, the Venusians had a hypnotic power that they exerted at will, and though they had no idea that any of us were ever to escape them, they probably threw a mental haze over us at times to mask their activities.

I remember the head Venusian, though, quite distinctly. I am the world's premier dumb-bell at most things, but I am human and always have had an eye for a handsome woman, even though Mrs. Hardiman thinks I was too susceptible to the charms of the Flower of Gold, as they called her in Venusian language.

In looks she was a humdinger. With that she combined the generalship of Napoleon, and had the affectionate disposition of a rattlesnake.

She leaned gracefully on an arm of the chair, her dimpled chin resting lightly in a slim hand, the nails of which, like those of all her race, were bright carmine, and looked me over with hard, green eyes. She was dressed in the same scanty clothing the others wore. Rossey was right about Venus having a warm climate.

I did not know whether to bow or salute or lie on my stomach and knock my head on the ground the way I understand they do in some savage countries, so I ducked my head and shuffled my feet a bit to show respect.

Big-head, or, to give him his Venusian name, Valva, pushed his way through the crowd of Venusians and started to sing his story at the Flower.

She trilled a low note in return, and he started to exhibit me to the company. I was led up and down the room, made to jump and bend and talk, all of which struck me funny. The crowd did not crack a smile. They struck me as a serious-minded race. Valva, with the pride of a circus man, had me open my mouth and show my teeth, and then had a bar of heavy metal, copper I think, brought

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in and I struggled with that for a while. I do not think I made much of a hit, for I nearly dropped it on a Venusian's foot when lifting it in both hands over my head.

I began to get sore. When she beckoned me to come nearer I shook my head.

"Nothing doing!" I shouted. "I'm not performing for any—"

An iron grip fastened on my right arm cut me short and I was conducted silently to within a foot of the Flower.

Curiously she reached out a white hand and felt my hair and the roughness of my beard, waved me away and raised her delicate eyebrows slightly toward a near-by Venusian. He disappeared but returned almost immediately with a silver basin, and kneeling before her carefully washed the hand that had touched me. I felt quite flattered.

Then I was led away.

Later in the day Valva came to the compartment where I was captive and I tried to get some information from him.

By dint of many motions and pictures on his tablet he informed me that several of my fellow-men were on board the whirling machine, that many had been killed as being useless for the purposes of the Venusians, and that I was to be kept with some others for a purpose he refused to divulge. He also told me there was one woman on board and a boy. From a description I gave him, I found it was not my boy, and heaved a sigh of relief.

When I questioned him about the object of the visit of the whirling machine to our planet he refused to answer, and also was not communicative concerning the life on Venus. I learned, though, that two whirling machines had left there for the earth, that the Flower was worried about not hearing from the other, that Venus was ruled by a Supreme Council composed of women, and that for some few hundred years the question of an invasion of the earth had been agitated there.

In the course of this and later conversations he told me other things. Such as, that the Venusians had no idea of religion as we understand it, but a very rigid code of ethics. I found out, too, that there was no such thing as love or marriage or home life, everything being arranged according to iron laws and certain females set apart to propagate the race and rear the young separately from the general community, which seemed to be an altogether unnatural state of affairs.

But, then, these creatures were unnatural in many ways. Physically they were perfect specimens, they seemed to have brains plus, but as far as kindly feeling or decency or common charity they had no more than a tarantula—not as much, I think.

Here is a sample.

Wandering about the lower end of the shaft one day, as far as I was permitted to go, I noticed a group of Venusians gathered in a circle looking at something on the ground. I joined the crowd and craned my neck to see what it was all about.

A tall Venusian lay on the ground. He seemed to be unconscious, and his usually death-white skin was purple in places and gray in others. What had happened to him I do not know, unless, with his system vitiated by our atmosphere, he had picked up some kind of fever from the human captives. Most of our diseases are unknown on Venus.

At any rate he lay there breathing heavily, and the group around him watched him as calmly as if he were a wounded rabbit. Presently there was a stir and the Flower appeared, a beauti-

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ful, living statue in white marble. She stood over him for a space looking at him through veiled lids under which there was a glimmer of disgust, and then plucked one of their silver rods from a near-by Venusian's hand and pointed it carefully at the dying creature's breast.

There was the usual sharp explosion like a photographer's flashlight and the Venusian on the ground stopped moving. She walked lightly away.

What they did with the body I don't know, unless they ate it. They were capable of that too. Nice lot of lads to be with. I got back to my compartment.

THEY were not idle all this time. There were about fifty Venusians in the machine, and they were moving about continually, coming and going, some leaving the machine and others working below me at something. There was a pretty constant whirring of machinery going on. I do not know yet whether they ate or slept at all or whether they worked in shifts. I was not allowed to follow them below.

Rossey raves over it sometimes.

"What an opportunity, Hardiman! And it had to be you! I would have given my scientific soul to have had your chance!"

I assured him he would have been welcome. I was not there from choice and far from wanting to know those creatures more intimately, all I wanted was a clean break as soon as possible.

There was great excitement one day —if you can say those people ever got excited over anything. The machine was closed tight as a drum, and my insides told me we were bobbing around in the air. I was left alone. Venusians hurled themselves up and down the shaft and dashed about. Muffled explosions came to my ears from time to time.

Afterward I found it was the battle of the 1st of August when the handicapped American army, without waiting for the European contingent which was delayed by the fogs, went into action against the whirling machine. Every one knows the story of that defeat. The Canadian force arrived in time to be completely wiped out with the others.

I saw nothing naturally. The whirling machine tilted sharply once when two of the swarm of airplanes around it crashed into it in a last sacrificial effort to pierce the hull. Otherwise it rode on an even keel.

In the excitement of the moment I stole away from my compartment and wandered about to see what I could see. I took to an opening at random, leading from the bottom of the shaft. It led to an alcove which, in turn, opened on a narrow stairway.

Cautiously following this I mounted a dozen steps, quite steep and difficult to negotiate, and stepped quietly into a low-ceilinged room, lit, or rather, obscured with the customary bluish light.

Some one advanced quickly from the corner with outstretched hands stuttering excitedly.

"Thank God! You've captured the machine? We've won?"

In the dim light a shock of gray hair and a pair of haggard eyes appeared.

"Won what? I'm a prisoner here," I answered.

He slumped down on a couch and bowed his head in his hands. He was a thin, tall man of fifty odd, wearing remnants of a pair of gray trousers and bedroom slippers.

"I thought you were one of the attacking party," he said, finally looking up. "I've been listening to them for hours."

"I hope they win then. I noticed some excitement—"

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He smiled grimly.

"If they win, of course, we lose. We are in the machine, you know, and go with it."

That was a sobering thought.

"But at the same time," he continued, "I am willing to go with them. Anything is better than the other."

"How? I should think to be killed would be plenty for me."

"Do you mean to say you don't know—but how long have you been here?"

I TOLD him of my experience. He listened, but did not appear to be paying much attention. He kept his head down or rocked it from side to side like a man in pain. Answering my questions he told me his name was Carter—a college professor of some kind and had been picked up by a Venusian the same day I was. I wanted to ask him more about himself, but he started up suddenly and paced madly up and down the little room.

"Time! Time!" he cried. "Just a little more time to warn them! If I could only reach them in time! Something could be done! How can I warn them?"

"Warn who? What's this all about, Carter?" I asked soothingly.

He stopped his wild animal pacing and looked at me.

"Hasn't Valva told you anything of what the Venusians intend?"

I shook my head.

"Well, what difference does it make now?" he muttered. "Still one of us might escape. Here, I will try to explain to you."

He held up one skinny fist.

"This we will say represents the earth. This other hand is Venus, and away off there we'll say is the sun lighting one side of Venus, which always presents the same side to the sun. That means a red-hot temperature on one side of their planet and a freezing polar atmosphere on the other.

"We also revolve around the sun, but also on our own axis, which allows us an even temperature. We are beyond Venus again and see the freezing side always turned towards us. Around us, in turn, our own satellite, the moon, revolves. Got that straight, Hardiman?"

I nodded. In spite of the gravity of the moment I almost smiled at his professional manner.

"Now in creatures as superintelligent as these Venusians and as lacking in soul we must expect remarkable things. Not satisfied with having subdued the forces of their own planet to their remarkable minds they are reaching out into the universe. We must think, now, in terms of planets where we thought in terms of nations. If I had not learned what I am about to tell you from Valva, one of their master minds, I would say it was the ravings of a lunatic.

"Half their planet is uninhabitable—with the coldness of the interplanetary space. Rather than chance on destroying their own planet in attempting to make it revolve they are determined to create a new sun on this side!"

"A new sun?" I gasped. "But how wild a notion—"

He held his hands up.

"Not so wild, either. You remember I spoke of the moon revolving about the earth. It is held in its place by centrifugal force. What do you suppose would happen if that force were removed for a short space of time?"

"Fly off somewhere?"

"No. It would, drawn by the earth's tremendous attraction, crash into us. The Venusians intend to strike this old earth of ours a terrific blow either by exploding the vast oil deposits beneath its surface or by boring a great hole

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and letting the waters of the sea into the interior hoping the great temperature of the latter will create enough energy to throw this planet off its path, slow it up and kill the centrifugal force that keeps the moon at its respectable distance of two hundred and forty thousand miles, so that it will crash into the earth!"

He clapped his palms together and paused.

"This little earth of ours will cease to exist forever. A blazing ball of incandescent gas will flare up to intrigue the curiosity, perhaps, of other minds on far-off planets just as our astronomers have been aroused by a spark in the dark skies in years gone by that tells us somewhere two worlds have crashed together. But this time it will be our own world."

I shook my head helplessly.

"I follow you all right, but it's too much for me, Carter."

"Consider the magnitude of it," he went on, hoarsely. "Ages ago kings erected pyramids as monuments—they were pygmies. No human mind had dared to contemplate such an undertaking as these soulless creatures have embarked on.

"They are here to create that other sun that will warm the frozen side of their planet. In doing so they will destroy a world—everything—mankind and all his works—gone in a flash of fire!"

"Perhaps you are exaggerating it, Carter," I suggested. "They may have some other object."

He was pacing up and down again, but stopped.

"If you should escape—but there's no chance of that. I am learning something about this machine. They despise our intelligence too much, I think. I am figuring a way out to wreck them if I can get access to a certain place in the machine. It is their heel of Achilles."

"Why do you suppose they have taken us in here?" I asked. "Curiosity?"

"I am afraid Valva has not been communicative with you at all. Their curiosity is not so easily satisfied."

"What then?" I asked.

"The longest ride you ever took, Hardiman—twenty-six million miles through space, never to return. They are taking us to Venus!"

CHAPTER IX

CARTER DOES HIS BIT

I SAT down heavily beside him, feeling licked.

"It's like a nightmare, Carter. If we stay here we will be transplanted through space—it's like dying," I shuddered. "If we do get out of their infernal clutches we go with the rest of the world."

"That's it," he nodded. "Unless we—I mean humanity—finds a way to beat them at their little game. That will take some figuring."

"Still," I exclaimed, jumping to my feet, "if I go it will be with the rest of the crowd. If I could find Rossey—"

"That's it!" he broke in eagerly. "If you could get out and warn them—there are bright men in the world—a way might be found."

I made up my mind to break away or die trying.

"How about you?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"I am staying—but not going with them. I have a scheme, hazy as yet, but I can try it later if I find I have to."

I was about to question him when he held up his hand sharply and bent his head toward the passage. There was a faint clicking of metal sandals.

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Suddenly the glistening, top-like machine plunged down into Long Island Sound, and the ear-splitting screaming of its engines stopped abruptly

"Hurry!" he whispered. "Not that way! Here!"

I plunged through an opening at the far end of the compartment into total darkness. Stooping, I quickly removed my shoes and, in stocking feet, with hands outstretched, groped my way to where a faint, blue light outlined another door.

It was a larger room than the one I had left with a door at the further end and was crammed full of the most heterogeneous collection of articles I had ever seen outside a junk shop. Piled pell-mell was a typewriter, an oil painting, an automobile tire, a sewing machine, several branches of trees, a plow, a bundle of books, a woman's hat, several cans of food with familiar labels, a few bolts of different colored cloths, a child's perambulator, a telephone instrument and more articles too numerous to mention. The place was stacked to the ceiling with them; everything portable that one could imagine and only one of each. I did not stop long among this collection for the museums of Venus, but made my way through an aisle in the center and entered another room.

I started back in surprise.

Ranged along the wall on either side were men of my own kind. As I entered, one dressed in blue overalls was examining a telegraph instrument on a wooden table. Another, rather outland-

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ishly dressed, was astride a bicycle and seemed all ready to start somewhere. A woman was seated, bending over a bit of lace. The remainder were standing like soldiers on parade and included a negro, several laborers and one at least dressed in the height of fashion.

"Well!" I exclaimed.

For a moment I thought they had not heard me. No one moved. Under the ghastly light, the woman bent over her sewing, the man on the bicycle remained with eyes glistening toward the front wheel and the one in overalls did not look up. A chilly feeling swept up and down my back. I reached out and gingerly touched my neighbor. I shivered and jerked my hand away.

His skin was cold and hard. Glassy eyes stared vacantly beyond me.

Keeping well in the center of the aisle I made for the end of the room, where a doorway was likely to be. Near it I came upon a cow, a horse and a dog standing in natural attitudes, and free from horror that our own kind inspires, I stopped to examine them.

They were stuffed, or rather, admirably mounted on something similar to our plaster of paris used nowadays and, though in awkward postures, showing the Venusian workman's ignorance of the natural habits of the animal, nevertheless, not a seam showed anywhere in the skin. The eyes were made of a substance like colored glass, but not well matched.

TO THIS day I do not know whether or not the humans had received similar treatment, but the thought gave me a horrible feeling of nausea. The idea that we represented nothing more to the Venusians than part of the flora and fauna of the planet filled me with a deadly anger and disgust.

From that moment I was ready to kill any one of them with my bare hands in order to get away. I was no longer a business man dealing in plumbers' supplies, but a primitive man inspired with hatred for these creatures.

Suddenly I started, listened and made for the end door.

The clicking of metal sandals sounded in the adjoining room from which I had come.

Hurriedly I detoured around the stuffed animals and groped for the door in the semi-darkness where a dim outline showed. Then I gave up for a moment. There was no opening there, only a square of the height of the door outlined in some phosphorescent substance, but absolutely smooth.

I am not usually a quick thinker, but there are times when a man has to use his "bean," so to speak. In a second I was lined up between two of the waxen-faced men at the wall, staring straight ahead at nothing and trying to keep my knees from trembling.

It might have been the light and it might have been that the Venusians, smart as they were, were not up to an earthly trick as old as the hills, but they gave no more than a cursory glance around before marching right by me.

It is also possible that they were not on the hunt for me at all. Their later actions would indicate it. I could not turn my head, but counted five pallid, tall figures gliding by, followed by the unmistakable figure of the Flower.

I could hear them groping about the square that had fooled me. There was a grinding sound and a flood of God's own daylight filled the compartment, lighting up in horrible detail the frozen expressions on the dead faces opposite me. They had opened a door leading to the outer world—my own world.

It was all I could do not to rush

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from my place. There within a few feet was sunlight and old Mother Earth and freedom. Slowly, a sixteenth of an inch at a time, I turned my head toward the door. It seemed hours before my eyes reached it.

The Venusians had gone except one —left behind, no doubt, to act as lookout. He stood with his back to me, leaning against the side of the hatch-way, a magnificent figure silhouetted against the warm sunlight. He stood between me and freedom.

How to get rid of him? I would have to kill him, but were these creatures susceptible to blows as we are? Those questions tumbled about in my brain. The others might be gone only a few minutes on one of their forays. I could not match my strength against his. I needed a weapon—something that would require but one blow. If I missed that I was lost.

I looked about me. The figure I stood next to had been a laborer, probably a road-mender caught and killed by the Venusians, and, with their customary exactitude, he was posed with his pick and shovel near by.

I reached over and disengaged the handle of the heavy pickax from the rigid fingers, by sliding it through them. Then, armed with this heavy weapon poised above my head I crept up behind the Venusian. I was in deadly fear all the time.

It could not have been possible that he heard me, for in my stocking feet, on the smooth metal floor my approach was absolutely silent. But some defensive instinct warned him of the danger. With only a yard separating us, he whirled silently around.

I had a momentary glimpse of an impassive face and greenish eyes balefully glaring into mine. Wielded with all my strength, the heavy iron smashed down with a sickening crunch on the wealth of black hair and he tumbled to the floor.

That sort of thing may be all right for a professional highwayman, but I confess I was not used to it in my line of business and had a funny feeling at the pit of my stomach. I stepped over the prostrate form without investigating and peered out the open door.

There was nothing in sight but the blackened ruins of Thermopylae. The other Venusians were out of sight. The opening at which I stood was not more than five feet above the ground and I was about to leap down and chance any spying eyes from the machine when another thought occurred to me. Reaching down I raised the Venusian by the shoulders and dragged him behind the row of victims, covering him partly from sight by moving the stuffed cow. I found the Venusian strangely light for a creature of his build and strength.

I looked abroad again.

The meadow that the Whirling Machine lay in was the same, Hank Garvin's, as it had landed in the first day. After all the maneuvering of the battle it had dropped on the identical spot. There was very little cover until one reached the nearest ruins about fifty yards away unless one could take advantage of a broken hedge that skirted the field. I decided to take a chance on that and lie hidden in the ruins until nightfall when I might make my way south.

I dropped softly to the ground, paused to get my bearings, and, keeping below the rim of the machine and crouching down, scuttled for the hedge. Once in its shadow I rested awhile then crawled along Indian style to the nearest wall.

For some time I lay there waiting for the inevitable. It seemed foolhardy to expect the Venusians, wide-awake

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as they were, to overlook me. I think now that I overestimated them. No movement or sound came from the interior of the Whirling Machine.

Cautiously I wormed my way inch by inch along the protection of the wall.

Hours later, every minute a century, darkness gathered.

I waited, a quarter of a mile away in the corner of a smoke-scorched wall, to make sure of the friendly darkness. Presently the moon rose, shone upon the ruins and the huge, top-like outlines of the machine.

I had turned my back upon it and was facing the south where fellow-men and freedom lay when an ear-splitting, prolonged screech sounded over the wastes of débris about me. I looked behind me and stopped dead in my tracks.

I stood frozen, watching.

Slowly, into the gray path of the moonshine the Whirling Machine was rising.

It seemed to go straight up, then waver and float, at a rapidly accelerated speed, toward the Sound. It was as I have said a huge, glistening affair and even after it had passed several miles I could still follow its movements. It was going out to sea. Over Long Island it rushed, gathering headway at every mile.

Suddenly it plunged downward like a tremendously heavy, inert mass of metal released from a supporting power. By that time it was barely discernible. It passed quickly from sight.

The screaming of its machinery stopped abruptly.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF THE VENUSIANS

SIDE by side, separated by a couple of yards between each man, the straggling line of armed searchers closed in a narrowing circle upon the sand-dunes. Somewhere in the middle of that slowly closing line of men, among the waving, coarse grass of the dunes, was the object of our search.

Beside me, clutching, a Winchester rifle and squinting through the glare of the hot sun reflected from the ocean and the white sand, Rossey stumbled over the hillocks and, as usual, talked.

"It's a kind of a lame ending, Hardiman. It would take months to tell you, but we have been scheming and figuring in Washington while you were shut up with the Venusians—darn this sand!—and we had a scheme worked out fairly well to beat the game. This fellow Carter must have found a way to beat us to it. I don't know how he got control of the thing—I gather from what you say he was a deep chap—but he managed to wreck it. Too bad he brought it over the ocean!"

There you are! That is Rossey all over. The Whirling Machine was gone forever. Once more the world was free of the menace of the Venusians and we could breathe again. I was safe with my family. Little Johnny was safe—had been all the time and what White had shouted to me when I rode off on that confounded bicycle was that Johnny had been brought in by Mrs. White that minute. The whole world had been given a reprieve. And all Rossey could think of was the wonderful chance Carter had had to save a few specimens of Venusians. Scientists are beyond me.

It was the fourth day after my escape from the Whirling Machine and the second after I met the party of soldiers and citizens and scientists with Rossey among them marching through the ruins of New York on ther way to try again their luck with the invaders.

He trudged along through the foot-clogging sand in silence for a while,

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keeping our distance from the adjoining men as we had been instructed to do.

"I think this is a waste of time," I said finally. "None of them could have escaped from the machine. They are all under fifty fathoms of Atlantic water now."

"No," Rossey answered, wiping his forehead and shifting the rifle to the other hand, "you did not see him, but this clam-digger that did swears black and blue that one of them came ashore—swimming and only yesterday morning, so he must have been in the water two or three days and come a long distance!"

"Two or three days! He saw a sea-lion I guess."

"He saw a super-man," Rossey answered quietly. "And presently when this posse gets closer I hope we shall see it too."

As if to emphasize his words a shot sounded way off to the right and a shouting or rather baying of the pack that closes on the kill broke up the careful formation we had been keeping. The line became a stumbling crowd of hurrying men.

"Come on!" shouted Rossey. "They've got him!"

But they did not have him—precisely. When I reached the outskirts of the milling crowd two minutes later the quarry was cornered but not taken.

They were gathered in a semi-circle of silent men, some knee-deep in the surf, others crowded on the edge of the sandy shore, all looking upward to a tall white figure with black hair whipped by the sea-breeze, on the brink of a dune jutting into the sea. Immovable, like the statue of some ancient god, the Venusian poised on the edge of the little promontory.

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It was the Flower of Gold!

She surveyed this motley gathering of hunters calmly as a superior creature might contemplate the yelping death in the eyes of a pack of wolves and prepare for it. Then her mesmeric green eyes slowly turned to the sea where in the cool depths lay the last of the Venusian invasion.

What the men were thinking of I do not know. Before the calm disregard of those averted eyes and the god-like beauty of that marvelous body they seemed struck dumb. But there was a certain grim tightness of the mouths of those around me that spoke of memories of human homes destroyed, lives crushed out and the civilization of mankind threatened. After all there could have been no middle course. It was Venus or Earth. One or the other.

There was a click of rifles off to our left.

"Wait! Wait!" Rossey cried too late.

The scattering volley seemed to spring from the ground. The smoke of the rifles was wafted away by the wind and still she stood, one hand clutching her side.

Then she seemed to slip head foremost into the waiting waves with only a slight splash like someone making a perfect dive. There was a flash of white face and closed eyes on the top of a wave and she disappeared from the sight of men.

"Like Lucifer never to hope again," quoted Rossey behind me.

I SEE more of Rossey nowadays. Besides my lectures on the experiences in the machine I have little to do. I do not seem to care so much for my old line of business. We sit and talk for hours and it is mostly about the Venusian invasion.

"Personally," he claims, "I think they were the victims of their own schemes to penetrate the center of the earth. It is only reasonable to suppose that creatures with sufficient intelligence to cross the vast spaces between ourselves and their planet must have been aware of the differences between living in this world and in theirs. I can only think they slipped up on it. They were weakening during the last few days. It might have been the enervating atmosphere here. It was also due perhaps to their underestimating the intelligence of our species.

"Take your escape, for instance. Their vigilance was relaxed to a certain extent. Carter evidently caught them napping. He did something that threw their machine all out of whack. The others must have all been wiped out when the leader escaped or they would have come with her. It will be a long time before they try it again."

"Let's hope there will be no next time," I said.

He shook his head.

"It depends on how long the others up there will wait for the return of this expedition. They will wait a long time without doing anything. Then—some day, perhaps after we are all dead and gone—the world will face a stronger force. It might be in the form of a relief expedition. Who knows? Ten, twenty, a thousand Whirling Machines maybe. This planet is no longer isolated. But by that time we may be in a better position to face them. At least we are together now, shoulder to shoulder."

Nowadays, what with rebuilding the cities that were smashed and assimilating the flood of knowledge that pours in every day—every one is interested in astronomy now since we discovered we are not the only pebble in the firmament.

Rossey has been appointed to the new science academy and works early and

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late devising plans to defend ourselves against a future visit from Venus. He is a brainy fellow and can talk like a streak. I wish I had half his brains.

But then my wife claims if I had I would have gone ahead to Venus and never come back instead of escaping in a stupid way as I did. Mrs. Hardiman has a lot of sense even if she does not fancy the way I rave about the good looks of the Flower of Gold.

Pushing back the pile of paper covered with my scribblings—I am no hand with a typewriter—I walk to the end of my sunparlor.

Between our local observatory and the huge microphone with its wires leading to the broadcasting station near by—one of hundreds of listening-posts for the detection of future Whirling Machines—stretches a broad expanse of smooth green lawns and flower-dotted meadows.

On the horizon, against the setting sun, are the rolling outlines of the new Thermopylae golf course.

Presently the sun fades out behind the screen of low trees. A tiny blue point of light takes its place in the heavens—Venus.

Like the eye of a scheming fiend it blinks thoughtfully at us from over the edge of the horizon and disappears suddenly.

How long they will wait? I often wonder.

The sequel to this story is "Venus or Earth?"

WOMAN OF ICE

HER eyes reflect the opalescent fires
Of suns that waxed and waned before the earth
Received the dust of those that gave her birth
In nameless sorcery. The moon aspires
In vain her mocking beauty to enslave.
And when the moon has burst apart, the skies
With dust are ringed, and bitter prophecies
Have been fulfilled, the secret runes that gave
Her life shall not have passed away; alone,
In naked triumph none shall look on, this
Mad thing that lust created shall, supreme
Among the dead, reign on, and often dream
Of olden loves. And many a skeleton
Shall feel the icy languor of her kiss.

—*Robert W. Lowndes*

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The Other Man's Blood

By RAY CUMMINGS

A strange experiment which enabled one man to "see" the thoughts of his deadly enemy

CHAPTER I

SOME PRELIMINARY PROBLEMS

"YOUR theory is certainly ingenious," laughed the Big Business Man. "I confess nothing of the kind has ever occurred to me."

"I did not mean to put it forth as particularly ingenious," replied the Brain Specialist seriously. "To me much of it seems quite obvious." He was evidently used to taking himself seriously, this eminent Alienist, yet he was not without a sense of humor, too, for his eyes twinkled as he looked around the club-room at the interested little group of men, and continued: "If it does happen to be a fact, what funny things some of us must see."

The Playwright cleared a space before him on the table. "Let's get this straight," he said crisply. "This is great stuff." He took a silver coin from his pocket and laid it on the table with a click. "You say," he continued, addressing the Alienist, "that in all probability that half-dollar looks either larger or smaller to you than to me?"

"What I mean," replied the Alienist, "is that I do not believe that any of the five senses of any individual are affected in the same way by external things. I do not think that there is any standard to which we all conform. On the contrary, it is my opinion that the standard is different for each one of us."

"All right," said the Playwright, and laid a smaller coin on the table beside the first. "That much is clear."

"Not clear at all," laughed the Big Business Man.

"Aw shut up, Jack," said the Playwright. "Give us a chance, will you?"

The Alienist moved his chair up to the table beside the Playwright. "What you want to get at," he said, "is how big those coins look to me."

"Yes," said the Playwright.

"Let me put it the other way," returned the Alienist. "How big do they look to you?"

The Playwright thought a moment. "That half-dollar," he said slowly, "looks about an inch and a quarter in diameter, and the dime about half that or more."

"You mean," said the Alienist, "you think that's the size they are. As a matter of fact I believe you're right—those are about their actual measurements. But you're wrong if you think they look that large to you now. How big is an inch and a quarter?"

The Playwright held up his thumb and forefinger.

"All right," continued the Alienist. "Now, honestly, does that half-dollar look that big to you? Measure it with your eye." Then he laughed at the puzzled expression on the Playwright's face, and went on.

"Of course it doesn't—not half as big, does it?"

The Playwright agreed that it did not.

The Big Business Man, sitting farther back from the table, also had been studying the coins earnestly through his extended thumb and forefinger.

"I think you're off on that line of argument," he began. "That half-dollar looks pretty small to me here. But that is only because I am so far away from it. If I get

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closer—" He rose as he spoke and took a step toward the table. "Now it looks much larger. And if I get right up to it"—he put his fingers down on the coin—"it looks its full size—an inch and a quarter. It's only a question of how far away you are," he finished, somewhat triumphantly.

"I felt sure one of you would think of that," said the Alienist. "You're quite right as far as you go. We are all of us agreed that the dime is a little more than half the diameter of the half-dollar. And also we agree that the farther away we get the smaller things look. Relative size is, I am sure, the same with all of us. But absolute apparent size is quite a different matter."

AFTER a moment of silence he continued: "The point is, we have all of us accepted the standard of measurement. We call it so many inches or feet. We know what an inch or a foot looks like to us, and we gage the relative size of things by that. And so, of course, we all agree that a thing is of the same dimensions, more or less, because we all have the same ability to estimate its size relative to the standard of measurement. But the point is, how do we know the inch looks the same to both of us? That would make all the difference in the world, wouldn't it?"

"An inch looks that big to me," said the Very Young Man, holding up his thumb and forefinger.

"Yes, it does to me, too," laughed the Alienist. "But how do you know how big your hand looks to me, or the space between your fingers? For all you know, if you could see that hand with my eyes you'd think it belonged to a giant, and you'd call that space two or three inches—or perhaps a yard—who knows?"

"If I may be allowed to suggest—" began the Country Doctor timidly. He was a jovially rotund little man, with side whiskers and spectacles well down on his nose. He was a visitor at the club.

"Go right ahead, Bert," said the Alienist, "you probably know as much about this as any of us."

The Country Doctor looked quizzically around at the company with eyes that twinkled over the top rims of his glasses. "I've treated lots of people in my time. More than you have, I guess," he said, turning to his friend the Alienist. "I was just going to say that if ever any one of my patients talked the way you do, I'd humor him very carefully, give him a pill, and hope for the best."

The Alienist laughed. "All right, Bert," he said. "Give me one of your pills; it won't hurt any, I know." Then, with a sudden thought, he went over to the window and raised the shade. "There's the full moon," he said. "Come here just a moment." The Big Business Man and the Playwright came.

"Now," said the Alienist, putting his hands on their shoulders and stepping back out of the way, "look at that moon. Look at it carefully. How big does it look?"

"Half a dollar."

"A dinner plate." They spoke almost simultaneously.

"There you are, gentlemen," laughed the Alienist, turning back to the room. "'Half a dollar'—'a dinner plate,' they say. We take something for which there is no common, familiar, relative standard of measurement, which is at a comparatively great distance away, and one estimates its apparent diameter to be ten times as great as the other."

The Banker had not moved from his chair nor spoken since the argument began. Now, as the three men turned back from the window, he laid down his cigar and reached for a push-button in the wall. "Let's have a drink," he suggested, waving his hand toward the room at large, "you people are dry enough, you ought to be thirsty."

"Much obliged, George," laughed the Big Business Man, "we admit the thirst."

"Speaking of the thirst—" said the Playwright.

"That's all right," said the Big Business Man, "George is always speaking of thirst."

"What I was going to say," went on the Playwright, blandly ignoring the interrup-

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tion, "I suppose your theory extends to the sense of taste also." He turned to the Alienist. "Do you believe we taste things differently, too?"

"Why not?" replied the Alienist. "Taste is certainly as individual as sight. I think it very probable that even the basic fundamentals of taste are quite different in each of us."

The Playwright thought a moment. "Then is it possible that what tastes sweet to me tastes sour to you?" he asked.

"Quite possible, yes," replied the Alienist.

"Wait a moment, gentlemen, don't let's go so fast," protested the Big Business Man. "You say, perhaps, what tastes sweet to some of us might taste sour to others? How does a lemon taste to you?" He addressed the Playwright.

"Sour," said the Playwright.

"Acid," said the Banker; "rotten taste."

"And you—and you." The Big Business Man indicated the others in turn. They all agreed that it tasted "acidly sour."

"Very well," finished the Big Business Man, "we all agree we think we know what a lemon tastes like, at any rate."

"You put it very well," said the Alienist. "We think we know what a lemon tastes like. What ever taste it is that a lemon gave to our sense when we first tried it, we have all learned to call 'sour.' So we all agree a lemon has a sour taste. As a matter of fact to me it may taste what you would call sweet. When I first tasted a lemon as a child, or anything similar, no matter what sensation I got from the taste, I was taught to call it sour. And I've been calling it sour ever since. But that does not mean that what you were taught to call sour is the same taste. Not at all."

"Then maybe custard pie tastes like apple," shouted the Playwright hilariously; "and pea soup tastes like tomato, and—and—"

"And I'll bet you like raw oysters with sugar, only you don't know it," put in the Very Young Man.

The Banker raised both his arms in protest.

"Gentlemen, gentler e cried testily, above the din of shouts . aughter. "For the love of Heaven cut out that stuff. I've listened to a lot of weird arguments in this club, but this one is the most asinine, idiotic—"

CHAPTER II

THE MAN IN THE CASE

THE Playwright rose to his feet suddenly. "Gentlemen, one moment," he interrupted with a melodramatic gesture. "I have a question to ask. We have heard this gentleman"—he indicated the Alienist—"expound a most interesting theory. We have tried to disprove it—we have failed. But, I rise to ask you, why are these extraordinary things so?" He waxed eloquently enthusiastic. "We believe they are so, but why—I ask you all, why?" He sat down abruptly and took a drink.

"That's philosophy," laughed the Big Business Man.

"All right," said the Playwright, "what if it is? Nothing's too complicated for us."

"I think I can help you out on that," began the Alienist seriously. The room became quiet in a moment. "You're right. It is philosophy when you search for the reason why are these differences. Red and green, for instance, are probably quite reversed in the perception of some of us. Yet the shapes of objects, I venture to say, are unchanged. Color changes, sound changes, but shape does not. Now philosophy teaches that there is a fundamental difference between these two classes. Color and sound are dependent for their very existence on our human senses. Without eyes to see, there can be no color; without ears to hear, there can be no sound. But substance and shape are not dependent on human senses for their existence."

"Why not?" interrupted the Playwright. "According to your own argument, if there is nobody to touch a substance it does not exist. That seems the same reasoning to me."

"That makes you an egoist. Are you an egoist?" demanded the Big Business Man.

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The Playwright looked bewildered. "Am I—am I a what?" he stammered.

"What a rotten thing to be," said the Banker, and they all laughed at the Playwright's confusion.

"That makes you an egoist," said the Alienist. "They believed—Berkeley was their leader, you know—that nothing exists except in the mind. I disagree with them. I draw the line at what we generally term material things. Therefore to me it seems even more logical than ever to suppose that what is dependent on our senses for its very existence should be interpreted differently by each of us, while that which is independent of us, remains constant. Do I make myself clear?"

"Well," answered the Playwright slowly, "I shouldn't like to say your conversation bubbled with the crystal clarity of a mountain spring. But I think I'm with you."

The Country Doctor cleared his throat ostentatiously, and looked as though he wanted to speak but didn't dare.

"Come on, Bert," said the Alienist, "you look as though you had something important to add to our argument."

"I haven't," said the Country Doctor; "you've been way out of my depth ever since you started. What I was going to ask was where you all got these unearthly ideas? I know it is your business to pretend to understand all the funny things that get the matter with people's brains, but I didn't think you'd get that way yourself."

"Nonsense, Bert," laughed his friend, "you never appreciated me, that's all. Why, I'll tell you," he went on seriously; "that theory was first suggested to my mind by a curious case of blood transfusion listed by Dr. Ralph in the Journal of the English Society of Medical Research, ten years or more, now, I guess it was. The case was most extraordinary. Something similar, but in an infinitely lesser degree, has happened in other transfusion cases, I understand, but nothing of enough importance to be recorded. This case was unique; nobody could explain it. Whether it ever was explained, I do not know. But it interested me tremendously, and as I got thinking it over, the theories about which we have been arguing came to me as a possible explanation. I'll tell you about the case if you like."

"Go on—do," they exclaimed in unison.

"It isn't a very long story," began the Alienist, "but to my mind it certainly is full of possibilities."

There was a stir in the room as they all drew their chairs closer to the Alienist and prepared to listen.

"I used to know Dr. Ralph in Paris—I have seen him perform one or two of his transfusion operations," began the Alienist again. "I was always mildly interested in that sort of thing. Then Dr. Ralph went to London. He was at the height of his fame about that time.

"One day I picked up a year-old copy of the Journal of the English Society for Medical Research, and listed among Dr. Ralph's transfusion cases was the one I have mentioned. The patient was named Jones—Charles Jones, I think. He was a man around thirty. The blood was given by an older man friend of his. The operation was satisfactory. Quite the usual one, in fact.

"The extraordinary part of the case was that when the patient came from under the anesthetic his intelligence was absolutely gone. He had become an idiot, unable to speak words, or to understand words. So far as the record showed, this man Jones had been quite a normal individual, suffering only from anemia that necessitated the operation. There was no reason to suppose his brain was diseased. Yet this blood transfusion completely destroyed his reason; no paresis, however advanced, could have affected him more completely. His helplessness, his mouthing, hideous attempts to speak were in fact all characteristic of the idiocy of paresis.

"That is in substance all the report gave. Only one other point I remember seemed to me of the utmost significance. Dr. Ralph mentioned that at times the man's eyes seemed to shine with an almost uncanny intelligence, as though there was something back of them that he was trying to communicate, but couldn't."

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The Alienist stopped speaking. The room remained quite silent. "That's all," he said finally.

"Gosh," said the Very Young Man, helping himself to another of the Playwright's cigarettes, "you give me the creeps."

FOR some moments no one spoke. Then the Big Business Man drained his glass, lighted a cigar, and moved his chair forward nearer the Alienist.

"I think I see what you mean," he began. In spite of his apparent effort to control it his voice trembled. "Your idea is that this Jones, through the transfusion of blood, saw, heard, and felt things, not in the way to which he had been accustomed, but with the senses of the friend who had furnished the blood?"

"Yes," said the Alienist, "that's just about what I mean."

The Playwright jumped to his feet. "Good Lord!" he began excitedly, "then according to that everything must have been so totally different that he couldn't recognize anything!"

"I think that's the explanation," said the Alienist quietly. "We must assume that for some unexplainable reason this particular transfusion of blood carried with it into Jones's brain the other man's individual interpretation of the external world, and at the same time nullified and overcame all the perceptions to which Jones's senses had become accustomed. Assuming this, it follows that if the original differences of perception were great enough between these two individuals, Jones's intelligence would be completely destroyed.

"In fact, with a set of circumstances as we have constructed them, it follows quite logically that the result would be similar to that which actually transpired in Jones's case."

"Let's get this straight," said the Playwright. "It's too big for me. It's making me dizzy."

"If you'll excuse me for saying so," began the Country Doctor, "it's an awful wild theory, but it seems to me that since you gentlemen have accepted the rest, to blame it on the blood transfusion ought not to be too much for your credulity." He beamed on them with a little superior air, belied by the twinkle in his eye.

"I can easily imagine how it would be," said the Big Business Man. "This man Jones came out of the anesthetic and found that every word he tried to use fitted wrongly. Everything he saw looked strange; everything he heard sounded differently; everything tasted differently. Why it must have been as though he were in another world. No wonder he couldn't understand, or make himself understood."

"And no wonder his eyes looked intelligent and pleading," said the Playwright.

The Banker shuddered quite visibly. "You people make me sick," he growled to hide his feelings. "What is the use of all this, anyway? You're getting yourselves all worked up over nothing. Maybe what you say is possible; Heaven knows I'd hate to bet on it. But what's the use? You can't prove it, you know."

"Of course we can't prove it," said the Playwright. "But it's great stuff to talk about, anyhow. Some day I'm going to write a—"

"I think it's damn rot!" said the Banker.

Unnoticed by the interested little group of men gathered around the table under the light, the figure of a man detached itself from the shadows in a corner of the room, and advanced toward them.

"Gentlemen, I—I hope you'll pardon me," he began in a mildly apologetic tone. "I could not very well help overhearing you. I have been sitting there." He indicated a chair close by the wall.

As he came within the circle of light they saw that he was a negligible-looking little man, forty or forty-five perhaps, slender of build, a pale face, pale-blue eyes, and thin, light blond hair. His smile as he spoke was pleasant; his whole personality was rather pleasing than otherwise. Yet he was so unforceful, so drab in both looks and demeanor that one would never have thought of looking at him twice.

The Playwright made way for him courteously, and indicated a vacant chair.

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"We're glad to have you join us," he said pleasantly. "We think, that is, nearly all of us"—he looked at the Banker and grinned—"think we're having quite an interesting little argument."

"It has been very interesting to me," said the little man.

"They think they've got a lot of wonderful ideas," said the Banker. "Easy enough to dope out weird stuff like that when there's no possible way of proving whether you're right or not."

"It has been very interesting to me," repeated the little man in a low tone, as though talking to himself. Then he looked from one to the other of the faces around him.

"I suppose, gentlemen," he went on, "I suppose I ought to—I hope you'll pardon me for interfering—" He spoke most apologetically. "Your conversation has been most interesting to me, because I—you see, I'm Charles Jones. I'm the man you've been talking about."

CHAPTER III

THE FACTS OF THE CASE

THE effect of this quiet statement upon the company was extraordinary. The appearance of the newcomer was so insignificant and his manner of speaking so mild, so almost timidly apologetic, that it greatly enhanced by contrast the effect of his words.

The Playwright, the Big Business Man and the Very Young Man all started to talk at once. It was the Very Young Man who first made himself heard. "Why, he knows all about it, he knows all about everything," he almost shouted.

The little man sat down suddenly in the chair that had been offered to him and seemed embarrassed at being so suddenly thrust into the center of the stage.

"Well, George, what do you say to that?" said the Big Business Man, turning to the Banker triumphantly. "I guess we can prove some of these theories now all right. This is the man we've been talking about; he's the man who knows all about it."

The Banker grinned back at him sarcastically. "Oh, all right," he said, "if this really is the same Charles Jones who lost his brains because he had a blood transfusion we'll get a fine chance to find out what a lot of bunk your theories are."

"Gee, you've got a mean disposition!" murmured the Very Young Man, and then looked promptly very much relieved when nobody heard him but the Playwright, who winked solemnly.

"I'm the same Charles Jones," said the newcomer wearily. "I was Dr. Ralph's patient and my—my head did go wrong."

"Will you tell us about it?" asked the Alienist gently. There was something about this inoffensive little man that made them want to treat him kindly. "We want to hear your story, naturally," he added.

"Are they right about things all looking so differently? Is that what was the matter with you?" asked the Very Young Man.

"Yes," answered Jones, and put his hands over his eyes. "That's what was the matter with me."

"Then our theories really do explain your case?" said the Playwright.

"They explain it, yes," said Jones. "You had the general idea about right, only it was a thousand times more horrible—more horrible—" His voice trailed away into silence, and again he buried his face in his hands.

"Give him a drink," said the Banker gruffly. "He looks as if he needed it."

The Very Young Man hurried out of the room and was back in an incredibly short time with a whisky and soda.

"Here," he said, offering it. Jones drank gratefully, and then looked around with his sad smile. "It's very good of you all, gentlemen," he said. "I'll tell my story if you want me to. I've never told it very often. I'm all alone—I haven't many friends. And it hurts very much to tell it."

"Pass it up," said the Banker, "we understand," and the others assented.

"I'll tell it," said Jones. "You've almost earned the right to hear it, since apparently you are the only ones who ever worked out the explanation of what really happened to me."

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"He did it," said the Very Young Man, pointing to the Alienist.

"The reason it hurts," went on Jones, drawing a deep breath and speaking so low they could hardly hear him, "is because it made me—made me lose my wife. And I haven't anybody else—so you see, I'm all alone," he finished and smiled again wistfully.

"Where's that waiter?" roared the Banker, breaking the silence that followed. "I pushed that button three times in five minutes and nothing happens. This is a rotten club."

The Very Young Man jumped up and pushed the button again violently.

"All I'm doing now is just looking for her," said Jones in the same low voice. "Just looking for her, because, you see, I don't—I don't know where she is."

"You want to tell us all about it," suggested the Alienist.

"I'll tell you all about it—from the beginning," said the little man. "You see, all I'm doing now is looking for her, and for him. I want to find him, too," he finished. He sat up in his chair abruptly, his eyes gleaming with a new light, and a bright red spot glowing in each of his pale cheeks.

"I'll be right back," said the Very Young Man. "I want to get that waiter. Please don't start till I get back."

Again the men settled themselves comfortably in their chairs, and prepared to listen. The Very Young Man returned in a moment with a much chastened waiter, and after the drinks had been ordered, Charles Jones began his narrative. He sat hunched forward in a big leather chair, just beyond the direct glare of the center drop light. He spoke in a low, even voice, with a preoccupied air, his tones calmly dispassionate, yet with a curious quality of repression. And from time to time, as he spoke of his wrongs, there gleamed in his eyes again that incongruous fire that none of his hearers quite understood.

"I am, or rather I was," he began, "a teacher of history. Twelve years ago, when I was twenty-eight, I became a member of the faculty of Rexford College, England. I am an American by birth, but I spent much of my boyhood in England, and was educated there. I was always in rather delicate health—I studied too much, I suppose. They used to call me the Bookworm in school." He paused a moment, smiled; then went on.

"I met the girl whom I—whom I afterward made my wife, just about the time I went to Rexford. She was an English girl, six years younger than I." He stopped again, and moistened his lips.

"Was she pretty?" asked the Very Young Man impulsively, and immediately looked sorry he had spoken.

Charles Jones flushed a little, and again he smiled his weary smile. "Very pretty—yes. Every one said that."

"You're an impertinent fool!" said the Banker gruffly to the Very Young Man, and the Very Young Man looked as though he agreed with him heartily.

"WE WERE married," resumed Jones, "about a year after I took up my duties at Rexford. We were very happy, only we—only we didn't have any children. Now I thank God for that!"

The Very Young Man parted his lips as if to speak. Then, meeting the Banker's glance, closed them again.

"We didn't have many friends, I'm not much at that sort of thing, and I was greatly absorbed in my work, and—and in her. I know now she must have found it terribly dull in that little town. She was a London girl, you see.

"We only had one real friend. His name was Willard Blackstone. He was a professor of chemistry at Rexford. We used to see him a great deal; we both liked him very much.

"In the winter of that year my health began to fail. I was always anemic, and at this time I grew rapidly worse.

"For several months I was treated by the local doctor at Rexford. I don't think my condition was particularly alarming and while I did not show any special improvement, still I certainly did not get worse. During almost all this time I remember,

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Blackstone was urging me to consult Dr. Ralph in London and to have a—to have a blood transfusion. He offered to undergo it with me—he was a remarkably robust man. He convinced me and the Rexford doctor that it would do me an immense amount of good.

"We went together to see Dr. Ralph. He told me such an operation was not absolutely necessary, but since my friend stood ready to furnish the blood—which Dr. Ralph examined and found satisfactory—he was sure the result would be beneficial.

"I decided finally to have the operation, and a month later my—my wife and I, with Willard Blackstone, went back to London. The transfusion was performed by Dr. Ralph in November at the Memorial Hospital, in London."

Jones stopped, and looked around at his audience with a helpless air. They shifted expectantly in their chairs, some of them, but no one spoke.

"Gentlemen, I—I hardly know how to go on," Jones resumed after a moment. "It is very difficult to put it into words. I took the anesthetic and I think—I think I went under it very hard. I don't know whether the sensations I felt were while I was losing consciousness or regaining it, but I do know that I was tortured by the feeling of a most horrible struggle within me. It was more than physical or mental torture: it was as if my soul was fighting—fighting a battle for its very existence. I seemed to be—every fiber in me seemed to be striving to combat some terrible evil.

"What's the use, gentlemen? What I say must convey so little to you, yet even now, after all these years, it seems so plain to me. The memories are so vivid—so vivid."

His voice trailed away again, and he stopped.

"You were regaining consciousness, probably," said the Alienist quietly.

"Why, what he is telling us," exclaimed the Big Business Man, "must be the battle of his soul trying to ward off the influence that came with the other man's blood!"

"Yes," said the Alienist. "What he is trying to describe is undoubtedly the result of this sudden usurpation by an alien influence of all the sensations his being had always held. God knows how we can understand, or even imagine the tremendous forces that must have been at work to effect this change."

"It was so horrible—so horrible," began Jones again, "and it seemed to last an eternity. For countless years—much longer, very much longer than all the memories of my whole lifetime, it seemed to go on. Finally I opened my eyes." He stopped abruptly. Then after a long silence he resumed.

"You'll have to excuse me, gentlemen, if what I say sounds incoherent. I am trying to put my thoughts into words that will mean something to you. My thoughts are very clear—very vivid to me, but somehow there do not seem to be any words to fit them. Can you understand that?"

"I've had it with dreams," said the Playwright. "You wake up and remember you've been dreaming. It is quite tangible in your mind, but if you start to tell it to some one it seems to fade away, and what you say sounds foolish. I've had that often."

"It seems to me quite logical," said the Alienist, "that since the very essence of this matter lies in the fact that everything became so changed that words were of no use, it is the most natural thing in the world to suppose that he would have difficulty in fitting words now to the impression he is trying to convey to us."

"That's just the way it is," said the little man. "It seems just beyond the border of tangible words—it's very elusive. I opened my eyes, and what I saw at first was a sort of—well, I suppose I shall have to call it just a gray mist. As far as I could see for—for illimitable distances there was a gray expanse of mist rolling and trembling. Then out of the fog, shapes began to take form. I saw the dim outlines of a room gradually closing in around me, all obscured in places by the fog. At first these shadowy outlines seemed vague, unreal and unstable—just floating in through the fog. Then as I stared the fog seemed gradually to dissolve. The room became steady and

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took on an appearance of reality. Only, the fog never entirely lifted: it hung like a veil between me and the room and in places it was so dense as to entirely obscure parts of the scene. I recognized the room at once; it was the room in the hotel near the hospital where my wife was staying."

Jones stopped again, and looked around at his audience. His face was flushed a little now, and his eyes sparkled with animation. He took another sip of his drink and waited, obviously expecting some one to question him.

THE Playwright was the first to speak. "I'm afraid I don't get you at all," he began.

"Neither do I," interrupted the Very Young Man.

"I thought our whole theory," went on the Playwright, "was that after this blood transfusion you saw things so differently that you couldn't recognize anything. That your intelligence was unable to cope with the new world as you saw it. Now you tell us about a room you recognized at once. It's very confusing."

"You said it," remarked the Very Young Man.

Jones looked apologetic. "I'm afraid I'm a very bad story-teller," he said, smiling. "I quite forgot to mention that while your theories are correct in their way, they are very incomplete. There was something else happened to me, far more—more revolutionary—something none of you have mentioned."

"What was it?" asked the Very Young Man eagerly.

"I thought," went on Jones, disregarding the interruption, "that the best way was to tell you just what my impressions were. You can fit in the explanation as we go along." He looked at the Alienist.

"Tell it your own way," said the Alienist. "I think I see—"

"Let me ask you this," interrupted the Big Business Man. "We are all to understand, aren't we, that when you first opened your eyes, you were in the hospital—that the real tangible world about you was so changed in every way as to be invisible?"

"Yes," said Jones, "practically so—at first, anyway."

"Then the hotel room you describe—that was an hallucination, a vision?"

"What I actually saw of the hospital appeared only as a gray fog," replied Jones. "What I thought I saw was—was the hotel room—"

"I don't exactly get that," said the Playwright.

"Never mind," replied the Alienist. "Go on," he added, "tell your story your own way."

"I can remember lying for a long time looking at the fog and the room. I seemed to be in the room now, for it had entirely closed in around me. The fog still hung down like a veil in front of me, and the heavy opaque patches rolled and tumbled about, hiding first one part, and then another, of everything within my range of vision.

"Suddenly I became aware of a figure, sitting in a chair by the window. It was my wife. And as the fog cleared away in front of her, I met her eyes looking over at me. They were filled with tears. Then she smiled pathetically. I tried to sit up in bed. I think I did sit up. The feeling was indescribably horrible. Then I spoke, and from my throat I heard issue unintelligible gibberish—hardly human, even in its intonation. Yet I knew I had spoken words—somehow amid all this phantasmagoria I seemed to know I was quite sane. Oddly enough, too, I was not particularly frightened.

"My wife, quite obviously, could not hear my voice. Her eyes looked straight at me, but she gave no sign. The fog drifted past her for a moment. Then it cleared again. As it did so, suddenly the whole room shifted downward several feet. It seemed to drop down noiselessly and smoothly. Then it slid toward me, widening out as it came, until my wife, still sitting quietly in her chair, was quite close to me. I seemed to be hovering in the air two or three feet above her and directly in front. As the room came to rest, she looked up

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into my eyes, and smiled again sadly. Then she spoke, directly to me this time.

"'What do they say now?' she asked in a low voice.

"She was looking at me, not through me; yet I knew it was not I to whom she was speaking. And then I heard another voice—a voice I recognized at once as Willard Blackstone's—saying:

"'It is as they feared, little woman; he's hopelessly insane.'

"Gentlemen, I hope you will understand me when I say that now all at once I realized fully the meaning of these fantastic visions. For the voice of Blackstone seemed to come from me. And I knew, quite definitely I knew, it did not come from me."

"Good Heavens!" muttered the Banker, as silence fell upon the little group of intent listeners.

CHAPTER IV

THE PSYCHIC BOND

IT WAS some moments before any one in the room spoke. Jones lay back in his chair, overcome seemingly with his memories aroused. The others sat staring at him blankly, too amazed for words. Only the Alienist retained a measure of composure. He smoked on quietly, apparently piecing together the new ideas as he heard them into the fabric of another theory reconcilable with that he had already formed. He was the first to speak.

"Gentlemen," he began quietly, "some of you probably have not been able to interpret clearly the things Mr. Jones has been telling us, or to reconcile his experiences with the theories we were discussing before he was good enough to make himself known to us."

"You said it," murmured the Very Young Man again.

"In order that we may all be able to understand perfectly his narrative," went on the Alienist, "and keep it free from the confusion of misunderstanding, I think I ought to give you my theoretical interpretations of what we have heard so far. Mr. Jones can check me up if I go wrong."

They all nodded assent to his proposition, and the Alienist continued:

"First of all, gentlemen, let us go back to our original theory. We decided that since the other man's blood in Jones gave him so utterly different a view-point, he could not fit in with the world as he saw it in any way. Hence he became, to all outward appearances, an idiot.

"Now, that theory still holds good. We do not even have to modify it. So far as he has gone, he represents the world as he actually saw it. Merely as a gray fog, colorless, formless, soundless. I can well imagine that in the first effort of his senses to adapt themselves to a flood of new impressions, they would fail utterly to interpret anything. It is quite conceivable to picture the result as he has described it.

"So much for that. Am I right, Jones?"

"Quite right—yes," said Jones with a sigh.

"Now, to add to our former theory," went on the Alienist, "we have to consider another fundamental change. A change. I must confess, that had never occurred to me, but which certainly seems perfectly obvious when once you think of it.

"We assumed that with the coming of the other man's blood would come this different interpretation of the outside world; but we did not assume that with the blood would come the ability to see the world from the other man's view-point—with his eyes, interpreted with his mind, so to speak."

"I don't get you," said the Playwright. "Say that again."

The Alienist smiled. "I'm afraid I'm meeting with Jones's difficulty," he said. "Words do seem rather inadequate to convey ideas such as these. What I mean is this. When Jones saw that room, he saw it from the view-point of Willard Blackstone. It was what Blackstone's eyes were seeing at that particular instant. When he thought his wife was looking at him, it was Blackstone at whom she was looking, to whom she spoke, and who spoke to her."

"And when the room slid downward, and then came forward," said the Playwright,

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"it must have been that Blackstone got up and walked across it. That would change Jones's viewpoint the way he describes, wouldn't it?"

"I've seen it that way on a railroad train," began the Very Young Man. "You look out of the window at a train on the next track, and all at once you think your train has started forward. But it hasn't; the other train has started the other way. But it looks the same to you."

"THAT'S a good illustration," said the Alienist. "Are we right about all this, Jones?"

"Quite right—yes," said Jones again, with the same hopeless air.

The Banker suddenly pushed his chair violently back, and sat up very straight, with a most determinedly belligerent manner.

"Now, look here," he began, addressing nobody in particular. "I like a good, honest argument. And, as most of you know, I'm not averse to swallowing a few wild theories upon occasion. I'm not a scientific man by nature; but since I've been a member of this club, these past six years, I've had a lot of science thrust upon me.

"Oh, I know I've had to accept some weird ideas as true. I've had them proved on me. I admit it," he added, at the smile on the Big Business Man's face.

"I really think," he went on, "that by now I'm an expert scientist. But right here I balk. With all due respect to you, sir"—he turned to Jones as he spoke—"you people are just hypnotizing yourselves into believing a lot of bunk. Something happened to our little friend here. Far be it from me to deny that; but just what happened, I'm blessed if I can find out. But one thing I do know: I can shoot your theories full of holes without half trying."

He sat back, trying to appear indignant, but only succeeding in looking his usual complacent self.

"Go ahead, George, shoot," said the Big Business Man.

"Well, in the first place," began the Banker, "here's Jones lying in bed in a hospital. He has some of another man's blood in him. All right. I can imagine that possibly it might change him in some way. It's even conceivable that he might think things, or even see things, that the other man had thought or had seen when the blood was in him. But for the love of Heaven how can you possibly imagine that while lying in that bed he would see things happening at the same time in quite another place? I don't understand how the blood's got anything to do with that."

"Why not?" asked the Very Young Man.

"Why has it?" retorted the Banker.

"Why hasn't it?" said the Very Young Man.

"Why not treacle?" laughed the Playwright. "You talk like 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

The Banker threw himself back in his chair and shrugged his shoulders. "You people have got 'Alice in Wonderland' skinned a mile," he said. "You're hopeless."

"I think your argument is quite all right," said the Alienist. "You have mentioned the great basic difference in the two theories. Our first one followed the assumption of the physical presence of the new blood only accounting for the change. Now we must admit something which is far less tangible."

"Call it psychic," said the Playwright.

"That's what I would call it," answered the Alienist. "It doesn't seem to me incredible that with the coming of this new blood would come a new—let us say, personality—mingled with and warring with the old. And with the establishment of this dominating personality, surely it is not a far cry to imagine a psychic bond being created between the two individuals. Call it thought transference, if you will. We admit thought transference has occurred between individuals entirely disassociated. How much more likely that it would occur in such a case as this."

"Have it your own way," said the Banker; "only I know—"

"It occurs to me," interrupted the Big Business Man thoughtfully, "that it is somewhat peculiar all this should have

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happened in this case, when so many other blood transfusions have been made without any such phenomena."

"It beats me," remarked the Playwright.

"I know why it happened to me," said Jones, and again his eyes gleamed strangely and his cheeks burned red. "I know why it happened, but I don't know how—I mean exactly what caused it."

"Why did it happen to you?" asked the Playwright.

"I—I—you'll understand when I—" He stopped.

"Couldn't we go on with the story?" suggested the Very Young Man.

CHAPTER V

THROUGH THE EYES OF ANOTHER

"WHEN I first realized," resumed Jones earnestly, "that the voice of Willard Blackstone was in some way associated with me and with my—my personality, so to speak, I found myself torn by the most conflicting emotions it probably has ever been the misfortune of a human mind to face. My body was lying in the hospital bed—of that fact I seemed positive. My eyes saw the real world only as an expanse of fog, rolling and tumbling about. My lips spoke gibberish, my ears heard only a faint, indeterminate hum of vague, unfamiliar sounds hopelessly mingled and confused.

"But beyond all that, I seemed to have acquired a new being. I saw this hotel-room now, after a few moments, as plainly as though I were in it. I heard Willard Blackstone speaking with a voice that seemed to come from me. I knew I was seeing what his eyes saw. And then suddenly I found myself thinking thoughts that I knew were his thoughts."

Jones stopped again for a moment.

"I am not going to try, gentlemen," he continued finally, "to make you understand the flood of impressions that now overcame me. I was filled with horror at the thoughts, the knowledge that suddenly loosed itself upon my intelligence. I can remember that none of this seemed queer at the time. I accepted it all as being quite a reasonable state of affairs. Only I was—was horrified at what I knew, and at my—my own helplessness to combat it.

"For some time my wife and Blackstone talked together. 'He has recovered consciousness,' I heard him tell her. 'It's as they feared—he's hopelessly insane.'

"Gentlemen, can I make you understand that as I heard him say this, and as I saw my wife's face whiten and her eyes fill up, I—I knew what he was thinking. Through my brain, dimly but clearly, were going the same thoughts that were in his. And I knew then that he did not think me insane; that he knew or believed my condition to be similar to what it actually was.

"I listened to them talk for a while. Then their voices grew fainter. The scene faded gradually, as though the fog were growing deeper and blotting it out. Then I became acutely conscious of my body lying in bed. Then came the silence of oblivion.

"The next thing I knew was opening my eyes upon the interior of a railway carriage. I caught a faint glimpse of my wife sitting beside me in the compartment. I heard Blackstone's voice, coming from me, speak to her. Then my ears were filled with a horrible, incoherent jargon of detached words, the fog rolled up again and blotted the train from my sight—all except one little corner that persisted dimly visible, fading and brightening alternately.

"Again I became aware of my body lying in bed; felt it more tangible this time, with an extraordinary sensation for which I have no words of description. The jargon—I suppose I may as well call it that—still roared in my ears, and the gray fog rolled about thicker and darker than ever before.

"Only now the fog seemed to be forming itself into shapes. I blinked at it for a moment, dazed, and found before me a huge, irregular outline that finally I perceived to be a nurse. In outline of form she was, shall I say, human? She seemed nearly ten feet tall, as she stood there beside me. Yet, curiously enough, I found that I did

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not have to look up to her any more than if she were of normal height. I shifted my glance away, and made out the footboard of the bed in which I was lying. It, too, was gigantic in size. Then I saw the dim outlines of the room, enormous in proportion, yet all seemingly in perfect adjustment with my vision.

"The nurse was dressed in white. I looked into her face. It was ghastly white, with a greenish tinge, and the cheeks were flushed with a greenish purple. I closed my eyes, shuddering.

"Again I heard that strange, roaring sound in my ears. A wave of air struck my hot, feverish face, and I felt a horrible touch of something pressing down upon my forehead, and then back over my hair. I held myself tense with eyes tightly closed, thrilling with—with fear at the feeling.

"I say fear, gentlemen. It wasn't fear. I don't know what it was. And I don't know how to describe that touch upon my head. It was horrible only at first because of its unfamiliarity. After a moment I found it not unpleasant.

"I opened my eyes again. The gigantic nurse was still standing beside me. I could see her arm stretching down toward my face, and then I knew it was her hand I felt upon my forehead. I looked into her face. Her purple lips were parting; I could see the gleam of her white teeth behind. Then she spoke, in a great, roaring voice, like an animal. I could make out the separation of words, but as I have analyzed it since I realize that nothing was familiar save an occasional individual syllable.

"THEN I saw in her other hand a glass of water—I suppose it was water. It looked like water, save that it reflected purple from the flesh of her hand holding the glass. She offered it to me, and I drank. The liquid sparkled down my throat like champagne, biting my palate and tongue with its sharpness. I choked a little and pushed the glass away. Some of the water spilled upon my hand. It seemed to eat into the flesh like an acid, but when I wiped it away the sensation was gone, replaced by the equally unfamiliar one of the touch of my hand against the bedclothes.

"I flung myself back on the bed, and watched the figure of the nurse as she drew back into the obscurity of the farther distance of the room.

"Gentlemen, I don't see much sense in my keeping on telling you these impressions. They only confirm, more in detail, of course, the theories about which you were arguing a while ago. For several weeks I lay in that hospital bed, as I now know, under the interested and puzzled scrutiny of the greatest specialists in England at the time.

"During these weeks, and the months following them that I spent in the sanatorium, I alternated between my perceptions of this weird, unreal, unfamiliar world that I knew was the actual world about me, and visions that presented themselves before me of the world as it was being seen by—by Willard Blackstone.

"My own thoughts were confusing, but sane, absolutely sane, and logically clear. Running along with them, sometimes submerged near to subconsciousness, at others dominating and subduing the thoughts of my own brain, were the thoughts of Willard Blackstone.

"If you will try and keep in mind, gentlemen, that all this was passing before my eyes and through my brain simultaneously, I can separate it for you, and tell you more intelligently what happened to me."

"Tell us about your wife," suggested the Very Young Man..

"The extraordinary aspect of the real world—the hospital room," went on Jones, staring straight before him, "became less and less confusing as time went on. I realized that after a time I must relearn completely the words that fitted nearly everything I saw, smelled, tasted, heard, and felt. And even the words themselves, the entire language was unfamiliar.

"It was several months, I think, before I was able to make much of a start in this reeducation of my brain. Yet my mentality, internally, so to speak, was always keenly

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alert. My physical health improved steadily.

"It was four years—four years before I left the sanatorium. I would have been there yet if I had had to entirely readjust my mentality to those new-world impressions. But, after the first year, the—the effect of the other man's blood began very gradually to diminish. This I first noticed just about the time I was beginning to communicate a little with the nurses caring for me.

"Through another most confusing period I found my senses gradually receiving more and more familiar impressions. I became what you—you would call normal about six years ago, and was discharged from the sanatorium. I said very little about myself to the doctors during my period of recovery. I started to when I first began to talk a little, but I was met with such incredulity, my statements were to them so obviously the result of a disordered brain, that I soon gave up the attempt to explain.

"And so my case has remained unexplained. I returned to normality, although even now I am just a little confused at times. And my friends—what few I have made"—he paused and smiled his sad, whimsical smile—"tell me I have—tell me I have sometimes the most annoying habit of repeating my words." He stopped speaking, and looked at the intense faces of those about him.

Silence fell upon the room. The smoke hung heavy about the little group of men seated under the center light. Then the Banker shifted his feet uneasily.

"Tell us the other side of the story," he said gruffly.

"About your wife," said the Very Young Man.

The smile faded from Jones's face. His lips set themselves into a thin, hard line, and again the red spots burned in his cheeks.

"Yes," he said; "I'll tell you the whole story—the whole story as I came to learn it from the thoughts of Willard Blackstone, and from his actions as I saw them with his eyes during the weeks and months I was in the hospital and in the sanatorium. I will—will make it as short as I can.

"WILLARD BLACKSTONE was professor of chemistry at Rexford when I went there. He was a bachelor, a few years older than I. He was a clever chemist, and really more than clever as a bacteriologist, with a taste for original research work, although he had distinguished himself in no way.

"He became in time a frequent visitor at our home. My—my wife and I both liked him. He—he fell in love with her almost at once, and it became the dominating desire of his life to get her away from me.

"I don't know just what occurred. You see I only got this part of his blurred memories that passed through my mind. But I know that he tried all the usual ways to win her. And he did it so carefully, so—so diplomatically he never lost her regard, her—her friendship, even though she discouraged him definitely and finally.

"I knew nothing of all this. I liked Willard Blackstone, and I was very much absorbed in my work. My—my wife never said anything to me of it, and so outwardly we all continued to be good friends.

"It was, perhaps, a year after I came to Rexford that Blackstone began seriously to take up his secret study of the human blood. For some time it had been in his thoughts to—to do away with me. Many ways were at his command if he wanted to—to murder. But he was afraid.

"Then came the idea of insanity, and he resolved to do something to me that would make me insane. The more he thought about this, the more picturesque a means of disposing of me it seemed. It became an obsession with him; he worked on the problem into which his researches led him almost constantly.

"I had always been anemic. I suppose it was because of that he came to think of the blood, and the possibility of introducing something into it that would derange the brain. I remember distinctly how one day

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he made me give him a sample of my blood that he proposed to analyze, and so tell me what was the matter with me."

Jones stopped for a moment. "Gentlemen," he went on, "I suppose you all know more about the blood than I do."

"Maybe he does," said the Very Young Man, indicating the Alienist.

"Maybe," said the Country Doctor, and twinkled over his glasses.

"What I know about the blood wouldn't help us a bit," said the Big Business Man.

"I can't go into technicalities," resumed Jones, "regarding the theories upon which Blackstone based his researches. I know very little about medicine; I have never studied it. I wanted to—afterward, but—it frightens me. All I do know about the blood I got from Blackstone's thoughts. I'll make it as clear as I can. Some of it I don't understand myself.

"As all of you gentlemen know, the blood is a circulating fluid from which the tissue cells extract their nutriment, and into which they discharge the waste products resulting from their activity. To supply nutriment and eliminate waste are the two principal functions of the blood."

"I knew that," said the Very Young Man. "Does it do anything else?"

"Another most important function of the blood," went on Jones, "is seen in the way in which it is employed in protecting the body from disease." He turned toward the Alienist and the Country Doctor, and addressed them almost questioningly, with an obvious deference to their greater knowledge on the subject.

"The blood may fight this invasion of alien living organisms in several ways. It may create some chemical substance to neutralize the toxic material produced by the organism; it may produce a chemical to act as a poison to the organism, thus killing it or rendering it powerless; or the wandering cells of the blood—the leucocytes or white corpuscles—may attack the organism directly and eat it up.

"Do I make it clear?" he asked the Alienist.

The Alienist nodded.

CHAPTER VI

"HORMONES"

"NOW you're talking sense," said the Banker; "the first intelligent stuff I've heard this evening."

The Big Business Man laughed. "Familiar tunes are sweetest, aren't they, George?" he said.

"Blackstone's first plan," continued Jones, "was to develop some poison that he could introduce into my blood which would have the peculiar power of permanently affecting the cells of the brain, and yet leave the body in normal health. He analyzed my blood carefully, several specimens, I remember he made me give him. It was his idea, I suppose, to find out the weak points, and to play upon them.

"I imagine"—he turned to the Alienist again—"that there must be a number of fairly well known chemicals with which he could have accomplished his purpose, at least in part. It was while he was considering this problem, and finding it not at all satisfactory, that an entirely new idea came to him. This was so much more—more picturesque it appealed to him at once. And it seemed to offer no possible risk to himself."

"It was blood transfusion," the Very Young Man burst out.

"Blackstone by this time must have had a tremendous theoretical knowledge of the chemistry of the blood—my blood, and his own particularly, for naturally it was his own blood that offered the greatest opportunity for his study. He had worked with them both so much, it was natural the thought of transfusion should come to him. Then, too, my health suggested a transfusion at this time. That was the important fact that made his scheme seem so feasible.

"You see, when he had decided to poison me directly, however cleverly he might do it, however subtle a poison he might use, there always remained the risk of detection, or at least suspicion, especially in view of his intentions—his intentions subsequently toward my—my wife. That was the reason why he hesitated.

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"Now with the plan of a blood transfusion, everything would be different. He knew whatever happened to me then would be attributed to the operation. It afforded a perfect alibi, so to speak, for any harm that might come to me.

"His plan now was to cultivate in his own blood such alien organisms as would be fatal when introduced into mine."

"I should think he would have injured himself," interrupted the Big Business Man.

"Not necessarily," said the Alienist.

"His problem was," went on Jones, "first to find some chemical that when introduced into the blood would produce the effect desired—permanent destruction of the intelligence—or even—even death he was not adverse to now.

"Another necessary qualification was that this poison must be of such a nature that he could introduce it into his own veins in small quantities first, without harm to himself, gradually increasing the quantity as his system became inured to its effects."

"Dope fiends get that way, don't they?" put in the Very Young Man.

"He knew that part of it would be practical," continued Jones, "for, as I have said, he was a remarkably healthy man, and I was—was just the opposite.

"Without much trouble he decided upon his poison, or, rather, some combination of poisons he prepared. The first experiment he made with guinea pigs. One he inoculated over a period of several weeks; then some of its blood he injected into another. The other one died. That seemed to promise success."

"Cheerful sort of villain, this Blackstone," murmured the Playwright.

"It seems to me," said the Country Doctor, "Blackstone was a bit of a fool."

The Banker looked across at him with a sarcastic grin. "There's hope," he said, "if somebody will admit something is foolish."

Jones smiled quietly in answer to the Country Doctor's remark. "You anticipate me," he said.

"Blackstone was overlooking one very important fact, and when he thought of it, he was furious at himself for being such a fool. He had got far enough along to have begun inoculating himself, when suddenly it occurred to him that before any physician would accept him for the transfusion operation upon me, his blood would have to be tested. And when that was done, its abnormality would of course be discovered. He had never thought of that before, and when he did it seemed to be an unsurmountable difficulty."

Private Notes from Mrs. M--'s Diary
1 Suffered all day with a terrible headache. Felt dull, tired and out of sorts. Remembered that I needed a laxative and decided my headache was due to that.
2 Took an Ex-Lax tablet before going to bed. It tasted swell — just like a piece of fine chocolate.
3 Slept like a top all night. Ex-Lax worked fine this morning and didn't upset me a bit. Headache's all gone now and I feel bright as a lark.
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet gentle! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowelmovement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.
10¢ and 25¢
EX-LAX
THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

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"Gee, that's so," said the Very Young Man, looking blankly around, as though he, too, had encountered an obstacle he could not overcome.

"Even then Blackstone did not give up the idea of blood transfusion, for it seemed to hold possibilties that appealed to—to his sense of the dramatic."

"His persistence was worthy of a better cause," said the Playwright.

Jones smiled again. "He never relaxed his efforts for a moment," he said. "I don't know just what started him on the theories of the difference in individual perception of interpretation by the senses. That's rather a lame way of putting it," Jones interrupted himself apologetically, "but you all know what I mean. I think it was an argument we had one evening. I remember it quite well. We were talking about the difference between sound-waves and sound; that sound waves were only vibration, and could exist without an ear to hear them. But they were not sound. That only came into being, so to speak, with the existence of an ear-drum and a brain to transform the vibrations into what we call sound. We got into quite the same argument you gentlemen were having a while ago.

"To me these theories were only amusing. I forgot them soon after. To Blackstone they opened up a whole realm of possibilities. He studied everything in philosophy on the subject, and, combining that with the knowledge he already had of the blood, finally planned a solution of the problem. This was the plan he ultimately brought to so—so successful a conclusion.

"The basis of Blackstone's theory was that if he could, through blood tranfusion, so impress his own individuality upon mine as to make his the dominating force in my brain, my intelligence would be rendered useless. As you all know, that is, in effect, what happened."

"What made him think it would happen in your case?" asked the Playwright. "It never happened in blood transfusion before."

"He didn't expect it to just happen," answered Jones; "he made it happen."

"How'd he do that?" asked the Very Young Man.

"In his study of the anatomy and physiology of the human blood," Jones began again, "Blackstone came to believe that somehow in the human blood lay the secret of that indefinable something we call personality—something which marks us as different from each of our fellow mortals—something that makes the blood of each of us unique, different from any other human blood.

"He knew, as all you gentlemen know, that in general structure all human blood is the same. The red corpuscles, white corpuscles, and many other cells whose names I never heard of, may vary greatly in number in the blood of different people. But in general characteristics their structure is the same. The functions they perform are always the same in the veins of one person as in another. So he knew that in none of them could lie the secret for which he searched."

Jones paused, and then addressed the Alienist directly. "You have heard of the hormones?" he asked. "You know about them?"

"What there is to know," said the Alienist, smiling.

"I never heard of them," said the Very Young Man.

"THE hormones, as I understand it," continued Jones, "are chemical substances, which are sent through the blood-stream like messengers from one group of tissue cells to excite another group of cells to activity. Not very much is known about them, I guess; and I understand that recently they have been made the subject of considerable research work. They are supposed to play a very important though mysterious part in the diseases attacking the human body. Is that right?" he added to the Alienist.

The Alienist nodded gravely. "The hormones are by far the most interesting as well as the least understood cells in the blood. Those of the thyroid gland particulary are now the subject of study."

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"Blackstone reasoned that possibly some of these hormones, especially those acting upon the tissue cells of the brain, might be individual in their functions," continued Jones. "I don't know quite how to explain what I mean. The idea is that whereas the red corpuscles in my blood would act much as the red corpuscles in your blood, some of the hormones in mine are individual with me, and in your blood would, under ordinary circumstances, not act at all. This Blackstone believed, and he believed also that it was because these hormones would not act upon any other tissue cells than those particular ones for which they were created, that no transfusion of blood had ever carried with it any marked transfusion of the personality of the person giving the blood.

"What Blackstone was able to learn of the hormones that was not already known at that time, or that since has been discovered, I cannot say. My impressions were confused, and also I had no way of understanding the complicated technicalities of such impressions as I did get. But I know that he must have discovered a great deal. What he did was to work upon such of these bodies in his own blood—those that were created to act upon the tissue cells of his brain—increasing their power, their—their virility, I suppose you would call it. He also was able to greatly increase their number. It was those specially created hormones in his blood that overcame the weaker ones in mine, and so impressed upon my brain his individuality."

"What an idea!" ejaculated the Country Doctor, while the rest of the men stared blankly at each other.

"Everything went off about as Blackstone intended," continued Jones, after a moment of silence during which no one had any question to offer. "You all know all about that part of it already."

"Tell us what happened to Blackstone and—and Mrs. Jones," said the Very Young Man eagerly.

"I think I'm hungry," said the Banker. "Crackers and cheese," he suggested with an expansive gesture—"and coffee. Push the button, will you, boy?" The Very Young Man did so, and then helped himself to the Playwright's cigarettes.

Jones sat staring at his feet, apparently undecided how to continue.

"You will remember, gentlemen," he said finally, "I mentioned having seen—having seen them in the railway coach going back to Rexford. That was about three weeks, I think, after the operation.

"My case was soon pronounced hopeless, and, as I have said, I was in due time committed to a sanatorium. Mrs. Jones continued to live in Rexford.

"The trustees of Rexford University were very good to her. They—they let her keep our house, and continued my salary for several months.

"Gentlemen, I'm—I'm afraid I shall have to make this part of my story very short. Somehow I—I just can't seem to tell it to you."

The Playwright patted him on the shoulder with a smile, and made him take another cigarette. "You're all right, old man. Go ahead. Sure we understand."

"During this time," began Jones again, "they—they were naturally thrown together very closely, and it was on Blackstone she—she came to depend. Oh, I don't want to excuse her for what happened; but God knows it must have been hard for her those months, and then to—to make up her mind to go—to go away with him.

"They went to Paris first. I could follow them there in the visions; and by what I saw happen and heard, I soon knew their life together was not happy. Then they came here to America, and Blackstone secured a position with a chemical manufacturer in Chicago.

"It was about this time that the influence of his blood in my veins began to wear off. I began to see the world about me in the sanatorium more clearly. And coincidental with that, the visions of Blackstone's world began to fade. How I struggled to keep them clear! How I fought to try and keep on seeing what—what became of her.

"I soon lost contact with Blackstone's thoughts entirely. Things were pretty bad

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between him and her at that time. He—he treated her shamefully. Sometimes what I heard him say, and what I saw, almost—almost killed me. And always there was nothing I could do—nothing I could do but just sit and watch—and listen.

"Then one day I could no longer hear them talk—could only see them. And with my eyes open they were gone entirely—the real world was too clear, too strong, and it blotted them out. Only with my eyes closed could I distinguish them—dim, blurred fragments of scenes of their life, every day getting dimmer, more elusive.

"Then one night I saw them quarrel, and he—he struck her. He struck her, gentlemen—he struck my wife." Jones was sitting up very straight now. His cheeks burned red, and his eyes gleamed with that strange, unearthly light. There was in his voice a new note, almost exaltation.

"I was sitting alone when—when he struck her. I started to my feet. I think I shouted as I ran forward. I must have hit my head against something, and when I recovered consciousness, the vision was gone. I—I never saw them again."

Jones's voice dropped to its former colorless tone. "That's all I know, gentlemen," he said. "I never saw or heard of them again. And ever since I have been looking for her—and for him. Because—because, you see—I don't know what became of her; I'm just looking—looking for her because—because I don't know where she is." His voice trailed away and died. Drooping down in his chair, he looked very pathetic and utterly ineffective.

CHAPTER VII

A SEANCE OF BLOOD

THE Alienist was the first to speak after a long pause, during which time the men sat smoking in awed silence, each thinking over the amazing things he had heard.

"Extraordinary story," muttered the Alienist. Then crossed over to where Jones, still huddled down in his chair, sat lost in the memories he had aroused.

"You had a terrible experience," he said kindly, putting his hand on Jones's shoulder. Then he sat down on the arm of the chair. "Haven't you ever heard of—them since?" he asked.

"No," said Jones softly. "For years I have been looking—looking everywhere. I have never seen or heard anything of either of them."

"Did you go to Chicago?" asked the Very Young Man.

Jones looked up at him and smiled his slow, weary smile. "I've been everywhere—everywhere possible," he answered. "I have a little income of my own—not very much"— he looked down at his shabby clothes—"but enough."

"What did you find out in Chicago?" persisted the Very Young Man.

"Nothing," answered Jones. "Blackstone and—and she had left months before I got there. I don't know where they went; I don't even know if—if they were still together."

"You've had a terrible experience," said the Alienist again, and held out his hand. Then he crossed back to his own seat beside the Banker.

"How about the coffee you spoke of?" he asked.

"You're right. Where's that waiter?" roared the Banker, getting up and pushing the bell violently.

"Gee, I'm awfully sorry for you," said the Very Young Man. "I wish we could help. Can't we?"

"I'm afraid I don't see how. But thank you very much; you're all very kind, gentlemen. Your sympathy I—" Jones stopped abruptly, and seemed quite overcome by his emotion.

"Here, waiter," shouted the Banker. "Hurry up! Darn it, this is a rotten club."

"It's a pretty good club," said the Country Doctor.

"You have to like it," said the Alienist; "you're a guest."

"I'm a guest, too," smiled Jones.

"I said it was a rotten club," said the Banker with finality.

The Country Doctor turned toward Jones. "May I ask—" he began. "You seem

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to have quite recovered your faculties. There have been no ill effects from your experience?"

"I suppose not. No, I don't think so," said Jones. "Only I—I acquired one or two very—very remarkable powers."

"How do you mean?" asked the Very Young Man.

"I didn't find it out until about three years ago," began Jones. "Just as an experiment an acquaintance of mine injected a few drops of his blood into my veins with a hypodermic. I—I found that for a short space of time I could read—could read his thoughts!

"The effect wore off in a few minutes," continued Jones, after a moment's pause. "Yet during that time I got very—very distinct thought impressions—more distinct than I ever got from Blackstone even."

"Great Scott!" said the Big Business Man. "That's weird. What could you see?"

"With my eyes open, things were very slightly disturbed. With them closed, I got vivid pictures of what the other man was thinking about. We tried it several times; it was always the same. Only we found that some thoughts he could hide from me—the ones he resolutely kept in the back of his head. Only those that were uppermost in his mind, so to speak, I could—could read."

"Do you go into a trance?" asked the Very Young Man.

"Oh, no; it's not like that," answered Jones. "You see, I get the other man's thoughts much like pictures floating before me. But I never confuse them with my own. I seem to know the difference always. And I can shut them off when I like—by talking about my own thoughts, for instance. No, it's not like a trance; I always have complete possession of my faculties."

"How do you explain your ability to get these thoughts from another person?" asked the Big Business Man.

"I don't know," said Jones thoughtfully. "I've often—often tried to reason it out. My blood must be more susceptible, I suppose."

"I imagine we could explain it theoretically if we thought about it enough," said the Alienist.

"I'll bet you could," said the Banker sarcastically. "You could explain anything if you had the time."

"It works," said Jones. "I've tried it with two other people since."

"Try it with us," suggested the Very Young Man.

"What were the other powers you acquired?" asked the Big Business Man.

"One other," said Jones. "When any one gives me some of his blood, I seem to be able temporarily to exert an influence over him. I can make him do as I say—if he'll look at me. It's hypnotic, I think."

"Your eyes look funny sometimes," said the Very Young Man.

"I've noticed it," said the Big Business Man; "they do look hypnotic."

"DISTANCE has a good deal to do with it," went on Jones. "I seem to lose my influence unless I am quite close to the person. The thoughts are not so clear, either."

"Try it on us," suggested the Very Young Man again.

The Playwright jumped to his feet excitedly. "Let me manage this," he almost shouted. "By gracious, but this would make a wonderful play."

"You don't mind, do you?" asked the Very Young Man, appealing to Jones.

"It's rotten bad taste, you know, after what he's been—" began the Big Business Man.

"But it would be awfully interesting, wouldn't it?" put in the Country Doctor slyly.

"I don't mind," assented Jones, "if you really want me to."

"Do we? Oh, gee; it's great," said the Very Young Man, moving his chair back to make more room.

"Come in, Slade," greeted the Alienist, as the clubroom door opened. The newcomer crossed the room and looked inquiringly at the little group of men by the table.

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"Hello, Orrin," said the Playwright. "Meet Mr. Slade, gentlemen," he went on with a flourish; "famous pianist—Orrin Slade—you've heard of him. Won't bother with the names, Orrin. All members of this club," he finished grandiloquently.

The Musician bowed with a smile, and drew up a chair among them. He was a distinguished-looking man, dignified and quiet in demeanor. He was dressed in dark clothes, with a high, black stock. His features were large and cast in an irregular mold. He wore his hair slightly longer than average.

"Whatever you're doing, gentlemen, you evidently find it very interesting," he said.

"You bet your life," said the Playwright enthusiastically. "Great stuff—wonderful stuff. Listen, meet Mr. Jones first. He's the main guy here. Mr. Jones—Mr. Slade. Can't tell you much, Orrin; we want to get ahead. Listen." And helped out by the Very Young Man, he told briefly, and quite incoherently, what they were about to do.

"Now, we're all set," he finished. "Let's get this right. This is wonderful stuff. Lock those doors, will you?" The Very Young Man jumped up. "Turn out those sidelights, too," he ordered. "Must do this right."

"Wait a minute; wait a minute," interrupted the Banker. "Let's get the coffee first."

"I'll get it," said the Very Young Man.

"Charge it to me, boy; and get some cigars," said the Banker as the Very Young Man hurried out.

When he came back, the Playwright had shoved the table over against the wall. The men were seated in a semicircle across the room, with Jones facing them.

"Get my case, will you?" asked the Country Doctor as the Very Young Man put his tray on the table. "It's in the checkroom. Wait, here's the check."

The Very Young Man was back in a moment.

"Now then, we're ready," said the Playwright, putting out all the lights except two on the center chandelier. "Lock those doors."

"Why lock the doors?" asked the Banker.

"Mustn't be interrupted," said the Playwright; "besides it's more dramatic."

"When he gets exposing the dark secrets of our lives, some of us may want to get out," laughed the Big Business Man.

"That's the idea. Nothing doing," said the Playwright. "I'm going to run this right. This is great stuff."

The room was now in semidarkness, with only a circle of light on the rug in the center and the corners quite in the shadow.

"Gee, this is spooky," said the Very Young Man.

"Lock those doors," ordered the Playwright. "Who's that?" he added.

One of the doors had opened, and a man stood hesitating on the threshold. The light from the outer room made him plainly visible—a stalwart figure in the uniform of captain of the English Army.

"Oh, it's Captain Ramsden," said the Country Doctor after a moment of silence. "I met him this afternoon," he added aside to the others. "Can he come in?"

The Playwright stepped forward. "Captain Ramsden," he said, and bowed magnificently, "pleased to make your acquaintance, sir. Step right over here, Captain," and he indicated a vacant chair next to the Very Young Man at the side of the room.

"Gentlemen, Captain Ramsden," said the Playwright. "All members of this club, Captain," he finished, and bowed again.

The newcomer looked around him pleasantly and smiled. He was the conventionally handsome type of man, with strong, clean-cut features, and just a hint of unpleasantness about the mouth.

"If I'm not intruding," he said, and seated himself beside the Very Young Man. Then he laughed. "What is it, may I ask—a seance?"

"Worse," said the Banker; "much worse."

"There's nothing worse than a seance," said the Captain.

"Call it anything you like," cried the Playwright. "Little play, private theatricals, charade—anything you like. No time to explain now; you'll see."

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"Does the food go with it?" asked the Capain. "This tray looks inviting."

"Help yourself," said the Playwright. "Is that door locked?" he added to the Very Young Man. "Wait, never mind, I'll lock it." He locked both doors and dropped the keys in his pocket.

"NOW then," he said, coming back to the center of the room; "I guess we're all ready this time. Who's first?"

"Take him," said the Very Young Man, pointing to the Banker.

"Yes, we'll start with you; eh, George?" agreed the Big Business Man.

"No, you won't; not me," said the Banker. "I've got enough trouble."

"Start with me," said the Very Young Man. "How do you get the blood? Does it hurt?"

"I'll decide," said the Playwright. "I'm running this. Who's got a blank sheet of paper?"

"Here," said the Very Young Man, handing him part of a letter.

The Playwright tore it into small, square pieces. "How many are we? Eight," he counted, and wrote each name upon a slip of paper.

"Now then, draw," he added, shuffling them up in his hands.

The Very Young Man drew one, and held it in the circle of light. "It's you," he said, indicating the Playwright.

A murmur of applause and laughter rippled across the room. The Playwright looked just a little scared. "How do you get the blood?" he asked.

"Now you are in for it," laughed the Big Business Man. "I'll bet it most kills you."

"Tough luck," sympathized the Banker, and looked pleased for the first time during the evening.

"Rats!" said the Country Doctor. "Where's my case? I'll do it."

In a moment he had his hypodermic out, and the Playwright, looking like a little frightened schoolboy, was having the lobe of his ear cleaned off with moistened cotton.

"Ouch!" he cried at the sharp prick of a needle in his ear.

When the Country Doctor was ready he motioned Jones to come forward. Jones had been sitting in the semidarkness. As he rose and walked under the light there came the sharp crack of breaking china from the floor of the room.

"Good heavens! What's that?" cried the Banker.

"Some one must have dropped a cup." It was the voice of the Big Business Man speaking.

The Very Young Man stooped under one of the chairs, and swept the bits of a shattered coffee cup beneath the table with his hand.

"Give me some more coffee," said the Banker. "This business gets my nerves all on edge."

When Jones had received the injection of blood he seated himself under the light, his figure thrown sharply into prominence. The eight men facing him, outside the circle of light, could only be seen dimly through the gloom.

Several minutes of silence followed, broken only by the heavy breathing of the Banker and the occasional sound of one of the men shifting uneasily in his chair. Jones sat motionless, his face buried in his hands. Then he began to speak slowly, hesitatingly, and softly at first, more rapidly and distinctly as he progressed. His voice was pitched in a monotone as expressionless as that of one who talks in his sleep.

"It's very dark and dim," he began. "I can't see; the dark is too heavy in between. I see a bridge—a big, high bridge over a river; I can see the lights of the boats passing underneath. Now a street—a street crowded with people. It's a theater letting out. Wait, you go too fast. It's all dim and blurred. I can't see."

CHAPTER VIII

THE VOICE OF JONES BUT THE MIND OF—?

JONES stopped a moment. His head was still bowed, his hands tightly pressing his forehead. Then he began again, his voice rapidly gathering force.

"Now it's clearer—much clearer. Can't

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you keep it that way? A bedroom in a hotel. There's a woman in the bed, and a white-capped nurse moving about the room. Beside the woman's bed is a cradle. The woman is speaking now to the nurse; but I can't hear her, I'm too far away.

"The nurse picks up the baby and lays it beside the mother. Now she goes out into the adjoining room. It's clearer now; that's good. A man enters the room; he is dressed in business clothes. He puts his overcoat and hat in the closet. I can't see him very well. He keeps his face turned away. He kisses the woman. Now he is sitting by the bedside looking at the baby. The man and woman are talking. I can hear them a little; I can't make out what they are saying."

Jones's voice rose suddenly.

"Think of what they're saying," he commanded, raising his head. "I can't—I want to know what they're saying." Then he bowed his head again, and his voice dropped to its monotone.

"That's better. The man is angry. Now the woman is crying a little. But I can't hear—

"Now the man is pacing up and down the room. He stops by the bed to speak again to the woman. I can't see his face. The features are blurred.

"The woman is clearer; yes, now I can see her plainly. She is pretty—very pretty, but very wan and pale. Now the man gets his hat and overcoat. Now he goes out and slams the door.

"A big building—it looks like a factory. I can see the street lights. The building is dark; there are no lights in its windows. The street is deserted; it is late evening. The houses here are small—the homes of poor people. A man comes up the street. He stops at the door of the factory. He has a key, he lets himself in. Who is he? I can't see his face. Who is he?" Jones's voice again rose to its commanding tone. Then he relaxed in his chair.

"Oh, the same man. That's better; I see him now. He goes up several flights of stairs. Now he enters an office. It's dark, and he lights a small desk light. A safe in the corner—yes, that is a safe. He opens it easily. He is taking something out and stuffing it in his pocket. I can see it now; it's money—a package of bills.

"There are too many streets—they're all confused. Where is the man? There, that's better—the factory again. The man is coming down-stairs. What kind of a factory is it? I can't see. The rooms are all so dark. Yes, I know, a factory where they make chemical instruments. I can see now a great, long shelf—hundreds of little test-tubes."

Some one of the men facing Jones in the gloom pushed his chair back suddenly. The movement made a sharp rasp of sound.

"A chemical factory!" came in a whisper from the Very Young Man.

"Too many streets," went on Jones's voice, unheeding. "They're all confused. Think clearer. There, that's better.

"Is this a theater dressing-room? You'll have to think it clearer. Yes, I see a girl, sitting before a dressingtable rubbing off her make-up. The man is here now. He kissed her. They are talking. I can almost hear what they are saying. But I'm too far away; I must get up closer."

Jones sat up suddenly very straight. "Come nearer; can't you come nearer?" he said. "I want to hear them talk."

"He tells you to move up closer," whispered the Big Business Man, nudging the Playwright.

Jones was talking again. "I can almost hear them. They are so clear. Come closer."

The Playwright awkwardly hitched his chair forward a few feet.

"Oh, now they're all blurred. Think them clearer. Now that's better; much better. He says: 'We must go tonight. I've got the money. It's tonight or never. Will you, dear?' The girl nods her head— Oh, now you've let them fade. I only see—

"Now we're at the stage door outside. There's the man waiting with a taxi. The girl comes out. She has a suitcase; they get into the taxi and drive away.

"You must make it clear. I can't see so many streets. One street they're driving down? Yes, now I can see the lights and the people. What city is this? Think the city; I must know the city. Oh, Chicago!

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"A railway station, and they're getting out of the taxi. I see the train; yes, I see the sleeper. They're coming into the car. This is their drawing-room. Where are they going? Yes, I know; they're going to New York." Jones rose and stepped back a pace from under the light. "Can you wait a moment?" he asked. "I'm tired. I'd like to wait a moment. Think of me, and the room here; just a moment."

The silence that followed was oppressive. After a time Jones sat down again in his chair under the light. "Look at me now," he ordered, staring at the Playwright. "Now—go on—'A week later.' Why have you written it? I can see it in great letters in front of me. Now the letters are fading; I see the hotel room again.

"The woman is still in bed; the baby lies in its cradle. Is the woman asleep? No, I see her eyes are open. What is she thinking? You'll have to think her thoughts clearer. Yes, now I understand. The man has deserted her. She is waiting, but he never comes. Who is the man? Can't you let me know who the man is? The father of her child? Yes, I know that. Not her husband? Has she a husband?

"'A month later.' You've written it again. Why do you write so big? There, now I see the bedroom. The woman is up now; she is sitting in the corner, crying. There is a man sitting beside the cradle. Yes, I see a doctor. The baby is dead. The doctor rises and stands beside the mother. Now, it's dark—all dark.

"The bedroom again. The woman is packing her clothes. There is no one else in the room. What is she thinking? Yes, I understand. She is alone in America. Isn't she an American? Oh, English. Yes, I understand. She is going East—to New York—to look for the man who has deserted her. She is sure he went there. And she has some money—not much, but enough for that. And she hopes, perhaps later, to get to England. Yes, I understand. When is she going? Wait—now it's dark.

"This is New York. I see the woman, coming along the street. She goes into a brown-stone house. I know, it's a boarding-house. She is going to live there. Then she will go out to find work. What kind of work? Oh, she doesn't know; she has no business training at all. She is in her room now—bare and gloomy, but comfortable.

"Wait—it's fading.

"Oh, the factory office in Chicago. Yes, I see it—plainly now. A stranger enters and makes inquiries. I can't see him clearly. Oh—it's I. You're thinking of me? Why are you thinking of me? That is not the right office—but you're thinking of me. What am I asking the factory people? Where the man went? And the woman? Who was the man? I couldn't tell before. You couldn't let me know. I asked you."

Jones's voice had risen excitedly as he poured out these questions. A new note of anger crept into it—and a note of command and authority. He pushed back his chair violently, rising to his feet.

"What do you know of all this?" he demanded. "You can't hide it from me any longer." He flung his arms out before him. "Look at me—look at me, I say. Now, think. I tell you to think. Who was that other man? Who was he? You can't hide his name from me. You can't, I say. Blackstone! Oh, then it was Blackstone. And the woman he deserted? My—my—"

CHAPTER IX

"A MASTERPIECE, GENTLEMEN!"

JONES stopped suddenly and took a step backward. "Yes, I know now whom you mean." He was forcing himself to calmness. "But you, who are you that you can know all this? What do you know?"

There was an abrupt silence. Then Jones sat down in his chair suddenly and laughed.

"Oh, of course. I never thought of that. Very clever. Naturally, I supposed—"

There came another pause. Then Jones's voice became tense again.

"What do you mean? When? Yes, I'll be careful. But when? I thought I did, but you didn't know it. Oh, you did? You were watching me? And watching him? Yes, more careful. Yes, go on. I'll do my part, of course. Try it."

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The Playwright coughed a little, and then cleared his throat violently. In the silence of the room the voice was startling. There followed a breathless pause. Then a match was lighted, disclosing the tense, white face of the Big Business Man as he held it to his cigar.

"Please!" said the Banker. "Don't do that." The Big Business Man snuffed out the light.

Jones's voice had begun again. "Can't you think back to Chicago? Think—yes, in New York. The woman is looking for a job. Yes, I see her—turned away place after place."

"Now she has a job? Oh, yes, I see the rehearsal—chorus-girl; a musical show on Broadway.

"Wait; you go too fast. I can't see this man. I see the room. Oh, yes, I see it is a studio—a man's workshop. Yes, I know it is Greenwich Village. The woman is here. I see her now clearly. It is the same girl. Prettier than she was, but older, much older. And—and just a little coarser.

"There is a man here. Who is he? An author—a playwright? Now I see him. It looks like you. Of course—yes, I see the man now. It looks like you. The woman and he are fast friends? Yes, I know that. He is in love with her—he wants to marry her. He is telling her now—that's it. That is what he is saying.

"He doesn't know her story. She hasn't told him yet. She wonders if she ought to tell him now.

"Wait—now it's all blurred and faded. Yes, I understand; she didn't tell him, and she asked him to wait for her answer.

"Now it's gone again. Only a street whirling past. I know, in an automobile. Two men. The playwright—yes, and—and Blackstone. It is Blackstone, only that's not his name now. What is his name now? You must know.

"You won't think his name. He looks different now—much different. Yes, I understand—I'd never recognize him, but I know this is Blackstone. He is a friend of the Playwright now? Yes, I know that, too. What is his business? A professional man—a scientist? Not a chemist? No, I know that. Is he a business man? Oh, you won't tell me—"

"Gentlemen, I—I—" It was the Alienist.

"Sh!" came from the Very Young Man.

"The Playwright's studio again. There is a lot of people in it now. Yes, of course, friends of the Playwright—a studio party. I see the Playwright, sitting apart, talking with his friend Blackstone. I'll have to call him Blackstone, if you won't let me know what his name is now. I can't hear what they are saying. We're too far away. Can't we get up closer?

"He is telling Blackstone about a girl he is very fond of. He wants to introduce Blackstone to her. It is the same girl—yes. I know that. Is she here at the party? She is coming; the Playwright is expecting her any moment.

"Now she comes in. Yes, I see it is the same girl. How pretty she looks. Every one here knows her. They greet her with shouts. She has made herself a favorite.

"Now she is standing by the Playwright. He puts his hand on her shoulder. I see him turn to introduce her to Blackstone. Oh, they recognize each other. There is a pause—it is an awkward moment, and dramatic. Yes, of course, I see it's dramatic.

"The Playwright doesn't notice anything wrong. His attention is distracted by some one else. He turns away. Blackstone and the girl shake hands casually. They are exchanging swift words in an undertone. Now they are moving apart, joining the others. Wait; you're letting it fade.

"I see the girl at home next evening. Some one phones her—yes, I know, it's Blackstone phoning; I can see him at the other end of the wire. They are arranging a meeting. Yes, I hear them. Now they are in a restaurant. I can't hear them talk—the music makes so much noise. Blackstone is angry. He admits running away with another girl. What happened to her? You never told us what happened to her. Oh, he has deserted her since?

"The girl sitting at the table with him is strangely silent. She is thinking hard. What are her thoughts? We ought to know her

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thoughts, too. Yes, I see. She is thinking she should forget Blackstone and ma the Playwright. She wants to—she kno she ought to tell him everything and arry him if he will have her. But she can t, for now she knows she still loves Black ne— will always love him. That's too b —too bad.

"She tells Blackstone she loves h ; she wants to come back to him. He ughs. Yes, I can hear her pleading—very mble, without pride, even without self-res t. It's too bad, very bad. And he laughs, d the things he says, and what he calls he - She has turned at last.

"Her cheeks are very red—her s are flashing. She asks him to take her t and leave her in the street outside. T y are getting up to go now.

"The street is filled with pleast -seek- ers. Blackstone and the girl come , and at the door they part. There is no gc -bye; he just leaves her standing there ar walks away. She hesitates a moment; she won- dering. Now on an impulse sh turns quickly and follows him.

"I see a more quiet street—hote along here. Blackstone has turned the co r. He is walking fast; he comes closer. I (n't see the girl. Yes, now I see her—just little way behind. Blackstone turns into broad doorway. What building is it? W t? Of course—how stupid! I might hav ecog- nized it—this building—of cour the Scientific Club.

"Blackstone has gone inside n(The girl stops at the door, undecided he is thinking whether she dares follow m in. She is going to wait outside for hin Yes, I see she crosses the street.

"AN HOUR passes. The girl is st wait- ing. When did this happen? itely? Oh, only last night. There's Bl stone coming out of the doorway. The g stops him. They are talking—standing ov there in the shadow. We must get up c er; I can't hear. Yes, she is pleading w him again—and threatening. Now I h her. And he says, 'Go to hell.'

"Wait; you've let it slip—it's con- fused. What did they do? Oh, yes, he called a taxi and left her standing there. And now she is walking away.

"This afternoon! It's this afternoon you are thinking. I see a little—not very much. It's very dark—there, that's better. But not as clear as it was—nothing's as clear as it was. You must come closer—come closer, don't you understand? You're too far away."

The Playwright slid his chair forward a little. He was just outside the circle of light now, with only a few feet separating him from Jones. The line of chairs in which the other men sat stretched across the darkened room behind him.

"That's better," Jones went on in his dreary monotone. "It's clearer now. This afternoon—you're thinking of what happened this afternoon. In the Playwright's studio—of course I know. Your studio; yes, I see it now. I see you both clearly. She is telling you the story of her past life—yes, I hear her. And you still love her. You still want to marry her. You say that to her. She is crying now. Yes, I know—very, very pathetic.

"She tells you she loves Blackstone—she cannot help loving Blackstone. And she wants to see him again. She has decided she must see him again—tonight. You advise her not to—you try to make her see she must forget him. There is nothing you can do to help her—no, nothing.

"But she insists she must see him again. She gets up to go. What did she tell you she was going to do? You are asking her now? And she won't tell you. She looks so pale and tearful—and yet determined. You are afraid of what you might do. And now she goes out, and you sit there alone—thinking.

"She will probably try to see Blackstone tonight. At the club. Of course, she doesn't know where else to find him. You are afraid of what she may do? Yes, I know you must still pretend to be Blackstone's friend. You will meet Blackstone tonight at the club?

"Now I see the inside of the club. What time is this? Tonight, after dinner? I see you now and Blackstone coming in together.

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The other men join you. Who are they—I see their faces, but there are no features.

"Why are there no features? The men look familiar. I'm sure I know them. Who are they? You must let me understand. Yes, I see a fifth man joining you. Now you are all coming into this room. Yes, I see. Two other men are in the room. One of them is sitting near the center, reading. I've seen him before. Who is he? His face is blurred —only Blackstone and you are clear. The five men all seem to know this other man. Yes—I see him greet them. There is still another man in the room, over there in the corner, dozing. He's clear—I see his face clearly. It's I. Yes, of course, I remember, I was there after supper.

"Now the six men are having an earnest discussion. I know. Theories of size and shape and taste. Yes, I see some of them looking at the moon through the window. None of the men see me sitting there in the corner. They are too much interested in their argument. Oh, now I am making myself known—I begin my story. Of course I remember—it was hardly an hour ago."

Jones paused a moment.

"I'm very tired," he began again, "and my head hurts. It's getting fainter, too—much fainter, much harder to know what you think."

"Gentlemen, I—I must protest—" the Alienist broke in.

"Sh!" came another voice. "Let him finish."

"It's so blurred," continued Jones softly. "Can't you think harder? Yes, I know—it is wearing off. You'll hurry? Yes—all right. Now I see the girl at home. Only an hour ago. She is coming up to the club here to see Blackstone. She will try to force her way into the club. She is desperate. Yes, I see her starting. What time is it now? Oh, just a few minutes ago, probably.

"A taxi coming up Broadway, and the girl inside. Yes, I know she is there, though I cannot see her—it's too faint. This room again. We are still sitting in the same places. What time is this? Now! Oh, it's now you are thinking about!"

Jones's voice rose in pitch, and he began talking much faster, almost excitedly it seemed, in contrast to his former measured slowness.

"Now, of this very moment, you are thinking! Where is the taxi? I can't see it.

"I see it, turning in, right here at the corner. She will be here in a moment. This room again. We are all sitting here. No one has moved. How do you know? I can't see anything. Nothing moving. Somebody moving behind you? Where? Where?"

A heavy thump resounded through the room, followed by a brief instant of stillness.

The Banker had risen violently for his leather easy chair and overturned it on the floor behind him.

"Stop!" he cried in a strained voice. "Good God, gentlemen, stop!" He looked around wildly. The others were all seated as before. Apparently no one had moved.

"How can you go on? Which of us is this Blackstone, since he is here? We must find out. You know." He clutched at the Playwright's arm.

"And the girl," he went on excitedly. "She will be here any minute. She may be outside now. I—"

The Playwright tore himself from the Banker's grasp, bounding to his feet. He shoved the Banker back abruptly and stepped under the light.

Not one of the other men moved, but each gripped his chair expectantly. Jones sat quiet, his head in his hands, his figure drooping.

The Playwright stood beside him under the light. The expression on his face was extraordinary.

"Gentlemen," he began with a bombastic gesture, "you have had the privilege of reading my innermost thoughts, my secret thoughts. An interesting experiment—a magnificent experiment—complete success."

"But, good Heavens—" began the Banker.

The Playwright raised his hand commandingly.

"What you have heard—dramatic. You must admit it. And thrilling? Terribly thrilling. How does it end? Who knows?

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Perhaps we will find out if we wait. For it's true to life—very. Perhaps it is true—who shall say? A masterpiece—the basic plot of what the world will some day call the greatest movie ever written!"

CHAPTER X

RETRIBUTION IN BLOOD

IF THE Playwright wished to astound his audience, he certainly accomplished his desire. His words were so utterly unexpected that for a moment no one quite grasped their meaning. The mimic drama he had so deftly unfolded for them had become so real when they found they were actors in it they could not at first credit this statement of its unreality.

Then Jones looked up with his slow, tired smile that confirmed the self-satisfied grin on the Playwright's face.

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated the Banker, and looked around helplessly for a chair.

The Very Young Man jumped up and righted the one he had overturned. The Banker collapsed into it, utterly overcome. For several minutes the men gave vent to their astonishment, while the Playwright stood under the light, grinning at them complacently, and Jones drooped in his chair, his hands over his face.

Then the Banker seemed suddenly to come to himself.

"Switch on those lights!" he exclaimed. "Let's get out of this damnable darkness. Open that window—there's no air in here."

The Very Young Man hastened to obey, but the Playwright stopped him.

"No, you don't—sit down!" he commanded. "I'm still bossing this thing. I'm not through with you yet."

"Oh, my gosh!" said the Very Young Man, and sat down again.

"Now, then, you listen to me," began the Playwright in a domineering tone. "You gave me leave to start these experiments. Believe me, they're interesting, and I'm going ahead with my ideas."

"You've got too many ideas—that's the trouble," growled the Banker.

"What do you think you're going to do next?" asked the Big Business Man. For once he did not laugh, and there was just a little note of anger in his voice.

"We're going to try that experiment all over again—with somebody else," answered the Playwright blandly. "That is, if Mr. Jones is willing. Are you?" he added.

"Yes," said Jones softly, without looking up.

"Well, I'm not willing," said the Big Business Man shortly.

"Gentlemen, I must protest against any more of this," began the Alienist. "You—"

"You'll kill the little man," added the Country Doctor.

"Will you do it, Jones?" persisted the Playwright.

"Yes," said Jones. "I'm all right."

The bantering smile faded from the Playwright's face.

"Very well, then," he said with finality, "we'll do it. Whom do we take?"

"You'll leave me out," said the Big Business Man.

"Me, too," said the Captain.

"And me," added the Musician.

"I say—" began the Captain; "you know this is—"

"Go 'way from here," growled the Banker, as the Playwright took a step toward him. "For a million dollars I wouldn't have anything to do with you."

The Playwright looked around with a withering scorn.

"Well, you're a fine bunch, I must say! It's lucky I've got these doors locked"—he jingled the keys in his pocket—"or you'd be falling all over yourselves to get away. You might try the window," he added sarcastically; "we're only up about a hundred feet."

No one had any reply to make to this, and the Playwright went on briskly: "We'll draw lots again. Where are those papers? Thank you," he added as the Very Young Man gathered them up and handed them to him.

"Now, then," he continued, shaking up the small squares of paper in his hands after

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discarding the one that bore his own name. "Say, what are you afraid of, anyway? You've only one chance in seven of being drawn, you know."

The Very Young Man stood ready to draw, when the Alienist interrupted them again.

"It's very unwise," he said. "Look at him," and he pointed to Jones, who still sat huddled in his chair, apparently paying no attention to what was going on around him.

"He's all right," said the Playwright, laying his hand on Jones's shoulder.

At the touch Jones started to his feet. "I said I was all right. I'll do it!" he exclaimed.

Then he sat down again and relapsed into his former attitude.

THE Banker slid lower into his chair with his legs stretched out before him, seemingly resigned to his fate.

"Hand me those cigars when you finish that, will you, boy?" he asked the Very Young Man. "Good Lord! How did I ever get into this?" he added with a groan.

The Very Young Man, as before, drew one of the bits of paper and held it under the light.

"Well, speak up, son—who is it?" asked the Playwright impatiently; for the Very Young Man stood silent, staring at the little piece of paper in his hand.

"It's me," he said finally. His face was a study.

"Thank the Lord!" murmured the Banker, with a sigh of relief.

The Playwright hesitated and looked down at Jones. Their glances met; then Jones closed his eyes again, passing his hand over his forehead wearily.

"Oh, well, if it has to be," said the Country Doctor. "Where's my case?"

The Playwright made his decision.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I've another idea."

"Damn your ideas!" muttered the Banker.

"We won't take you," said the Playwright to the Very Young Man.

The Very Young Man looked both relieved and disappointed.

"What do you mean, you won't take him?" asked the Big Business Man.

"No, son, we won't take you," the Playwright repeated.

"Why not?" asked the Very Young Man.

The Playwright assumed again his bantering manner.

"Don't you realize," he asked, "this thing takes class—real intellect? You saw me do it. Classy stuff—concentration; real intellect, that is. No, we won't take you."

"Oh, I say now—" began the Very Young Man.

"Sit down over there," said the Playwright, indicating the Very Young Man's chair.

"Now, then, gentlemen," he continued in his most irritating manner, "I'm running this. Here's my idea."

"Give me that cigar, will you, boy?" said the Banker. "This man's driving me crazy."

"What we ought to do," said the Playwright, "is take each one in turn, till we've had everybody."

"You're a fool," said the Banker. "We'd be here all night."

"And the little man would be dead," added the Country Doctor.

"My idea is," said the Playwright, "since we haven't time to take each one in turn, we'll take 'em all at once."

"Is that what you call an idea?" muttered the Banker. "Great Heavens, what will the man suggest next?"

"It's more than an idea—it's a conception," went on the Playwright grandly. "A wonderful conception—a magnificent conception; a conception worthy even of a greater brain than mine. How about it, Jones?"

"Take them all at once," said Jones, without looking up. "Take them all at once. Yes, I'll try it."

The Playwright bowed. "There you are, gentlemen, he'll try. With simple eloquence he says, 'I'll try.' He'll take them all at once. A most awe-inspiring experiment, gentlemen—a fitting climax to an interesting evening."

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"You're a damn fool!" growled the Banker.

"Thank you very much," smiled the Playwright, unruffled. "You think to wound me. Yet gladly will I mix my blood with yours in the veins of this, our mutual friend."

"Your blood," said the Banker. "We had yours once. That's enough."

"I said my blood," said the Playwright, with finality, "and my blood goes."

Then for a moment his manner changed. "Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen," he cried appealingly, "haven't you any sporting instinct? Don't you want to see this thing through to the limit? He's all right," waving his hand toward Jones; "it won't hurt him. Besides," he added shrewdly, "maybe it won't work with us all. Who knows?"

"Where's my case?" said the Country Doctor. "Only—I'm not responsible for this."

"That's the talk. You've got the right idea," laughed the Playwright. "Here's one sport, anyway. Line up, gentlemen."

Helped by the Very Young Man and the Alienist, it took the Country Doctor only a few minutes to draw a few drops of blood from each one of the men.

"Right ear this time," said the Playwright when it came his turn. "Same blood, you know—the other ear's sore."

They mixed the blood on a bit of glass, and in a moment more it was injected into Jones, who never moved from his place during the whole proceeding.

When they were quite finished the Playwright heaved a sigh and sat down abruptly. "Back to your places, gentlemen," he said, "and silence."

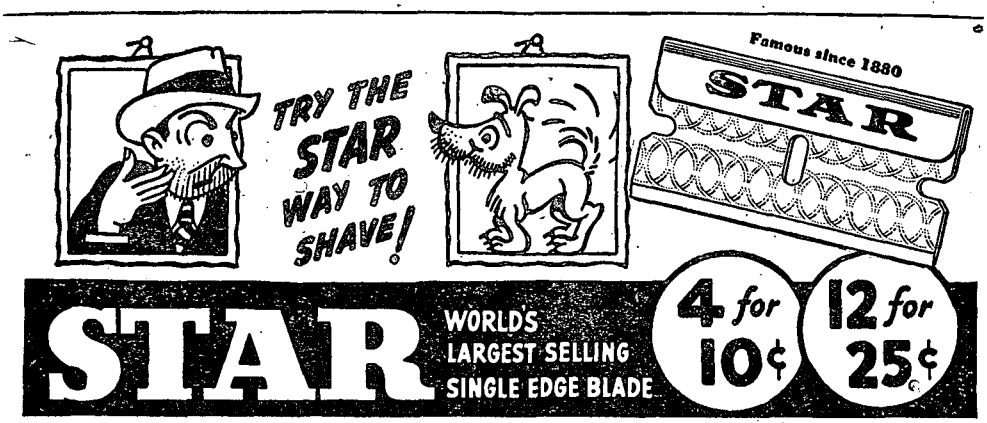
THE men seated themselves as before, only this time the Playwright was much closer to Jones. The room became quite silent.

It was a long time before Jones began to speak. When he did, his voice was so low at first they could hardly hear him.

"Too much—too much," he began. "All dim and blurred and intermingled. Very confusing—almost unintelligible. Yes, you I understand. Dominating now, of course. Almost as clear as before. Yes, you're really sure now? Why. Oh! No, I didn't. I was afraid to look.

"Wait. I see the inside of a big building, crowded with people—very dim, but clear now. It's a theater—no, a concert-hall. Yes, I see a pianist on the stage. Oh, it's you. Yes, I recognize you. There's somebody playing billiards—yes, I see you standing by the table; and the table is hanging in mid-air, in that great auditorium. Wait; now there is a—now there are others—oh, so many others, all crowding in.

"Soldiers marching—yes, there, a whole ship-load of them, leaving port. They are crowding the rails, waving. And the Stock Exchange; and there's—there's a hospital. Yes, I see it—a studio with canvases around. Oh, yes, you. Go on—now's the time; hurry. Yes, I understand—I've had him once, faintly, very faintly—but clear. Yes, I know—careful. I will. Now—back—



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yes, I understand—back—farther away—away—"

The silence of the room was suddenly broken by the rasping sound of a chair sliding on the floor. It was the Playwright shoving his chair back in line with the others.

Jones's voice was continuing: "All dark—so dark. What are you all thinking of? It's fading. What is the matter? It's fading—dark—all dark—all dark."

Jones's voice trailed away into silence and he stopped.

For what seemed an interminable time there was absolute stillness in the room. It was broken by the voice of the Big Business Man.

"Enough of this. It's foolishness now," he said.

"Sh!" whispered the Very Young Man.

"Dark—all dark and blank," went on Jones unheeding. "Yes, go on. Yes, you did notice? Just now. No, I cannot see from here—you're sure now? Oh! Yes, I got a little of his real thoughts—just a little—a moment ago.

"Dark—all dark. Where is the street? Only a little street I see; and an automobile. Yes, I'm pretty sure, too. I think I'll do it now—now—"

There was a brief pause. Then Jones bounded to his feet and, picking up his chair, flung it behind him with a crash.

"I've got you now!" he fairly shouted. "I've got you now, just where I want you—at last—at last!"

The change in his manner was complete. He stood under the light, his figure drawn to its full height. His cheeks flushed, his eyes flashed fire. His whole demeanor was dominating, forceful, and confident.

"I've got you," he went on. "You can't get away; I've got you, body and soul. You're clever; oh, yes, very clever. But you're not superhuman. You can't control all your thoughts. And now I've got your blood in my veins—your blood in my veins again after all these years."

There was confusion in the room as the men rose in their chairs.

"Switch on those lights, boy!" shouted the Playwright. "Hurry. Not these—over there—all of them. I'll do these."

The room was suddenly flooded with the dazzling light, and for a moment the men stood blinded.

"Back—farther back, all of you!" cried Jones.

They retreated slowly before his advance, fascinated by the power of his flashing eyes.

AS HE came toward them Jones kicked the chairs aside, clearing a space in front of the men who were now backed almost to the wall of the room.

"I've got him—got him right here, gentlemen, with his blood in my veins, his thoughts in my head. We've been playing a little comedy, gentlemen; but this is real—real at last."

"My God!" began the Banker. "I—I—"

"Silence!" commanded Jones. "Listen to me, all of you. I thought I recognized him when I first saw him to-night. But he's changed, and it was so fantastic an idea—so wild a chance—I thought it just a curious likeness. But he saw something later I did not see."

Jones flung out his arm toward the Playwright.

"He suspected and he watched, from his seat in the dark. I could not see—I was in the light. And what he saw confirmed his suspicions.

"Then he told me—through his blood. And we played out a little comedy, thinking to trap him. Oh, he's clever, very clever, and he kept quiet. But he's not clever enough, for he gave himself away.

"I know I could have confronted him at once when I was sure. But I wanted his blood in my veins—I wanted his thoughts in my brain. And I've got them, gentlemen—got them now. He can't hide anything from me now."

"Watch him," cautioned the Playwright.

"I'm watching him; I've got him now. But his thoughts are blurred and confusing."

Jones flashed his glance back and forth across the line of men.

"Look at me, all of you." He took a

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step forward. "Look at me—look at my eyes—my eyes, I tell you." He met the eyes of each in turn. "Think of me," he commanded. "Think only of me—there, that's better. All the same thoughts now. Keep it that way. Keep it that way, I say."

"Closer to him," said the Playwright; "then you'll get it."

Jones turned suddenly to the side. "I'm getting it clearer now. You can't stop thinking. It's superhuman—you can't stop thinking. Where is she? What became of her? That's what I must know. You've got to think of it. You can't hide it from me now."

He strode forward and confronted one of the men, who stood with his back against the wall, near the side of the room.

"Look at me, I say—you can't avoid my eyes that way. That's it—you must. Now—think. What did you do with her? Where is she? Oh, I—"

Jones's body wavered and he put his hand to his eyes.

The Playwright started forward, but Jones recovered himself in an instant.

"I'm all right. I—I couldn't realize—" His voice broke.

"So she's dead," he went on in a lower tone. Then his anger suddenly broke forth. He flung his arms out before him, and one of them brushed the man's shoulder. The man shrank from the touch. "Are you thinking the truth? Is it true? When did she die, and how—how? You must think. I command you to think how she died. A suicide! She killed herself! You drove her to it. You—you miserable—"

"Look out!" shouted the Very Young Man shrilly. "He's got a gun."

The man's hand was slowly moving to his side.

"I know you're armed," said Jones. The suppressed passion in his tense tones thrilled his hearers. "I know you've got a gun—yes—a little one there in your pocket. But you can't get your hand to it. Her revolver! The very one she killed herself with! That's what you are thinking!"

Jones abruptly broke into weird, eerie laughter.

"The revolver she killed herself with! Retribution, gentlemen." He brought his hand down heavily upon the man's shoulder. Then he stepped backward a few paces.

"Stand aside, gentlemen!" he cried, waving his arms. "Out of the way, all of you. Retribution—at last!"

The other men drew aside at Jones's command, leaving him facing his enemy. For an instant the two men eyed each other in silence.

Then Jones spoke again. "I've got you now—got you, body and soul. And you're afraid—afraid of me—little Jones!" And again he laughed.

"Take out the revolver!" he commanded. "Take it out, I say. Is it loaded? Is it? Oh, it is! Now, that's it—you have it in your hand now. Bring it out—bring it out, I say. There, now, raise it up. No, not this way—at yourself, of course, at yourself. Not your heart—no, your temple. Up with it—up with it, I say. Press it hard—there, that's it. Press it hard. Is your finger on the trigger? Now—fire!"

A shot rang through the room; the body of Captain Ramsden hung wavering an instant, and crashed to the floor.

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The Sleep of Ages

By STUART MARTIN

A woman's cry across the centuries—real, poignant, and he knew what he must do. . . .

"THEY say that the man is mad; long years of excavating in the vast necropolis of Thebes has turned his brain." Jordan sipped his coffee in the pavilion of the bungalow and flicked his cigarette in the direction of the lone figure standing at the base of the cliffs. "I'm not surprised. But he secured the papyrus, for all his madness."

"Who is he?" asked Borden, his eyes on the tall, thin individual his fellow excavator indicated. "He looks more Arab than European."

"Everybody in Luxor and Karnak knows him," replied Jordan. "He has haunted the mountain and valley of the tombs for years. Some days you will see him up near the Colossi of Memnon, some times at the Rameseum, some times at Der-al-Bahri. You see all these caves tunneled in the limestone cliffs? He is searching for the tomb he wants to find after having lost it in a sandstorm. Dalling is his name. He was an officer in the Egyptian army, but threw up his commission to go excavating. Here he comes."

The lonely figure had turned in their direction and came slowly over the sand toward the bungalow. He was still a young man, and his frame, if thin, showed signs of a strength that was enduring and unsuspected. His eyes had a strange, far-away look in them, as if he was used to gazing across vast spaces and inspecting heights. There was something almost noble in his bearing, something aristocratic in his gesture that destroyed a first hasty conclusion that he was an ordinary person. He came slowly up the steps of the verandah and faced the two men who had come to Egypt to serve the science of archaeology.

"Could I have a word with Mr. Borden?" he asked quietly.

"I am Borden. Won't you sit down? You are Dalling—ex-Captain Dalling—aren't you?"

The stranger bowed and a sad smile passed over his features.

"Yes, I'm Dalling. Most excavators have heard of me. They have all been warned—about me. But still I want a few words. It's about the papyrus and the tomb, you know."

He drew his chair close to the two scientists and rubbed his palms softly together while his eyes were fixed on the valley and the mountain beyond. Here and there, through the sunlight, the dark formations of the entrances to the tombs looked like blots on the face of the limestone rock. Beyond the hills the Theban plain stretched east and west, north and south. The white garments of the workers among the tombs gleamed in the dazzling light, and the sound of an occasional pick striking against the rock came like a small, sharp tap over the sand dunes.

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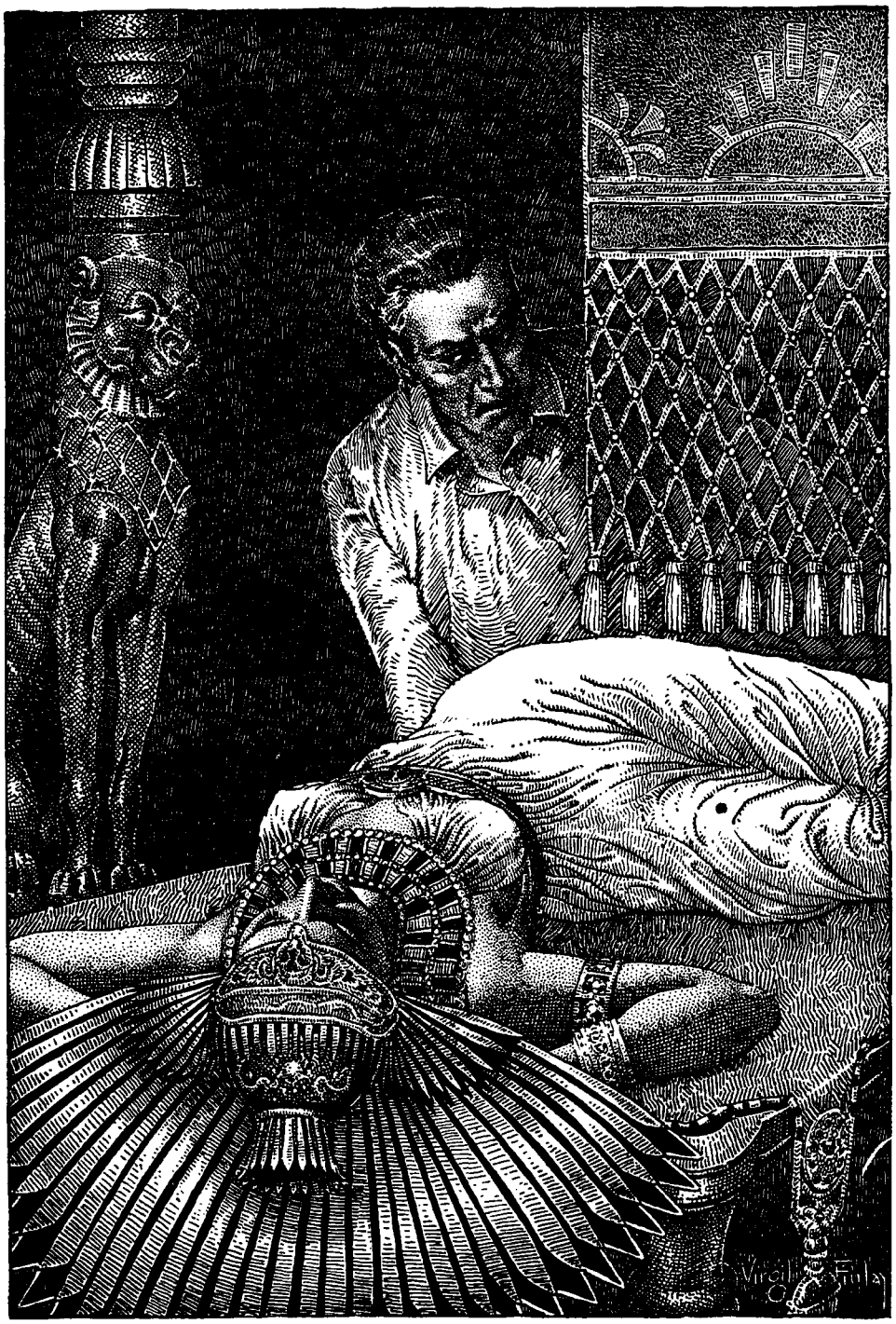

"Beloved Sais! Awake! I, your lover, call you!"
There was a slight movement as of a sleeper stirring. . . .

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Dalling sipped at the coffee which had been brought out by a servant for him, but he declined the cigarette which was offered. For some minutes the three men sat in silence, Jordan and Borden watching the face—the fascinating, wistful face of this man whom everybody said was mad.

"I came to see if you would take the trouble to enter the tomb," said Dalling at last. "You are excavating in the valley—"

"We are working on one of the ancient kings' burial places," interrupted Jordan, "but I am afraid that I can't promise to start any other excavation meantime. You see, we have reached the inner chamber where we expect the mummy is lying, and after we have opened it we'll be going away. But if we can give you a hand in any other way we'll do it."

Dalling sat biting his lip. It was the answer he had received for many seasons from every excavator to whom he had applied to aid him in his quest. They all fought shy of this man who talked as he talked.

"You won't find the mummy in the chamber you are about to open," he said quietly. "It was to save you labor that I came. The chamber is empty—rifled by Arabs generations ago, so there's no loot left for you."

There was a hint of sarcasm in his tone as he referred to the "loot," but it dropped out of his voice at once and he leaned across the table earnestly.

"Maybe you are like the others and think that I am mad? Maybe you believe that it was the sunstroke that sent me raving about the girl who lies down there in the heart of that cliff? Will you listen to my story. I tell you, you must listen. You are on the wrong track for your dead Pharaoh, but you are on the track of the tomb I have been searching for these five long years. Won't you listen to me?"

HIS eyes began to glow with eagerness and his voice trembled as he clenched his fist and tapped the table with his knuckles.

Jordan drew a long breath and glanced quickly at his companion.

"Please don't excite yourself, Dalling," he said soothingly.

But Dalling had risen to his feet and stood with a flushed face and tense arms by his side, quivering from head to foot. For a moment it seemed that he was about to spring at Jordan; but suddenly he turned on his heel and walked to the front of the verandah and looked across the valley and the tombs. His long arms were stretched out in a mute appeal to something invisible and his face seemed to have suddenly taken upon it something of the sublime ecstasy of a saint.

"He's on the old tack," whispered Jordan to his friend. "His madness makes him think there is a girl somewhere in the tombs calling to him. He babbles about it incessantly and claims that he is the reincarnation of her lover in ancient Egypt. Look out; we're in for the story which he tells to all the excavators."

Dalling had turned and came back to his chair on which he sat down heavily. He turned a worn face toward the two scientists.

"If I tell you my story, will you listen?" he asked with the pathetic appeal of a child. "I expect you have heard some of the gossip they talk about me. Won't you hear what I have to say for myself? You've got to listen, for you're working near the place. And Sais is there. Yes, you've go to listen. If only I had the money to employ workers for myself!"

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"Don't tell us if it gives you pain, old man," said Borden gently. "Maybe some other time—"

"There will not be any other time," interrupted Dalling quickly. "I tell you this is the time. I have been over at the tomb you are working at. Your men have started to dig into the inner chamber. They will find nothing. I told them so, and I tell you so. And you might leave soon and the great chance would have passed. My God, to think that you men won't believe me! Well, can you deny the story on the papyrus? Can you deny that?"

"How do you know that we'll find nothing in the inner chamber?" asked Borden.

"Because I have been there already."

The statment made the two excavators sit up straight in their chairs; but they glanced at each other and then slid back to their positions of ease. What he had just said proved that Dalling was mad surely, for the tomb at which they were working was a new one, only recently discovered, and had no appearance of ever having been rifled by Arabs.

"You don't believe me? All right. I'll prove it."

Dalling leaned his elbows on the table and faced them. There were pink spots on his cheeks by this time and there was an unnatural light in his eyes. Before they could sidetrack him he was off on the story which he had told to others; the story which earned for him the pitying contempt of all who worked in the Valley of the Kings during the season.

"It is well over five years since I threw up my commission and started to find the tomb," he said. "I needn't go into details of the first time I was attracted toward Egyptology. Can a man live in this district and not be attracted? Every time I was able to get leave I came here and did some digging. I had money then. My natives were good workers. At first I went round the Rameseum, the Mortuary Temple of Rameses II. You know the pillars of that temple. It is legendary that one of the pillars falls when a tomb is disturbed. One pillar fell when I was there.

"It was the third from the west end facing Thebes. You know it, maybe. The thud of its falling came across the valley to me as I sat in my tent and everybody in Medinet Habu went out to see. The cloud of dust it raised was floating in the moonlight when I arrived. I took a photo of the thing as it lay and sent it to the authorities in Cairo. I don't know what they did with the picture."

"It is framed in the museum," put in Borden. "I saw it as I visited the museum on the way here. Your name is on it."

"I wouldn't be surprised if they had doubted even that photograph," said Dalling bitterly. "They've doubted everything else I have sent them—every letter I wrote asking them to help in the greatest find of all."

He passed his hand over his face wearily, closing his eyes as if he was tired; but next moment he was bright again and eager.

"I mentioned the photograph to let you see that I am not talking as madly as they give me credit for. Well, after the fall of the pillar I came over here, and after the preliminaries were complete I started to work out a theory. Hitherto, I had been digging more or less at random. Now I began to excavate with reason. I started near the tomb of Seti I, a Pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty and father of Rameses II."

"But the tomb of Seti I has been

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emptied long ago," exclaimed Jordan. "Anybody knows that. His alabaster coffin in London now."

"Yes, I know, I know, I know. I was not after Seti I. I was digging down into the heart of the cliff, believing that in this way I would hit upon more than one tomb. I was using an old method. If you know your Egyptology as well as you are credited, you will know that some fifty years ago some Arabs discovered a shaft at the bottom of which was a tunnel. In that tunnel more than fifty mummies were found. They had lain there for more than a thousand years—all members of royal families too."

"That is true," murmured Jordan. "They are all at Cairo now."

"Yes," cried Dalling, "but the tunnel was never explored to its end. These mummies had been taken there for safety by the priests during some troublous time the country was passing through. They had never been taken back to their tombs. Among them was the body of Seti I. It was in that tunnel that I made my discovery."

HE PAUSED and gazed anxiously at the two men before him. It was clear that he was controlling himself with difficulty. His face bore a strained look and his glance was constantly whipping from one to the other of his listeners.

"I went down the shaft—that very shaft where the Arabs went half a century ago. I was lowered by my workmen; most of them are still to be found in Luxor, if you want to question them. You know what I found, don't you?"

Jordan cleared his throat, intending to say something to relieve the tension which Dalling's eagerness had aroused. But Borden, his companion, did not know Dalling's story, and bent forward.

"What did you find?" he asked quickly. "What did you find, Dalling?"

"I found Sais," came the brief reply; and as he said it the man clasped his hands tightly in an attitude of prayer. It was as if he had mentioned a holy name.

"Sais? Who was Sais?" persisted Borden, in spite of the warning nudge from Jordan.

"Ah! Then you do not know? Jordan has not told you? Let me explain."

He drew from his pocket a roll of parchment which he spread out on the table. It was covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Dalling's eyes seemed to grow misty as he raised them toward his questioner.

"This is a copy of the papyrus which they took from me when I was in the hospital. They took the original from me, saying I was mad. They said I had sunstroke. The fools! Listen, Jordan, it is no use you trying to wave me aside. How many times have I asked you to help me? Every season you have come here. Always you have promised—anything but what I have asked. And now, by Heaven, you've got to do it. I tell you the chamber you are about to open is empty, but there is another. Look here, sir."

He stabbed the parchment with his forefinger and Borden bent his eyes on it.

"You may read this after I have finished, then you'll wonder if I have made up this story. Man, I tell you I couldn't have made it up. Down in that tunnel I thought that I was really going mad; but then I understood things before they dragged me up to daylight and took me to the hospital. Where was I in the story? Oh, yes, I went down into the tunnel. I had an electric torch with me and I kept flashing it about. The tunnel was bare stone—bare as the palm of my

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hand. It was dark and cold, too. I crept along, fingering the slabs of rock as I went. I traveled maybe three hundred yards and then I felt a loose slab—a loose slab, as I sit here!

"I started to work on it with a small jimmy which I carried. It took me maybe an hour to get it worked free; and I looked into the hole. It was dark as night. I crawled through and found myself in another chamber. Can you guess where I was? I was in the antechamber of Seti I's real tomb. It had been stripped bare. Débris lay about. The remains of his royal couch were lying in ruins. A footstool or two and several jars. All broken. I came back to the tunnel and went up into daylight. My men thought I had been very long down there, but I did not think about them. I believed I was on the point of making a discovery and I collected some provisions and tools and went down again.

"I wanted to work alone and without interruption. This time I went farther along the tunnel until I came to a blank wall. I started to tear it down, and I worked like a demon. I got the wall down at last and once more I crawled through. This time I was in a lighted chamber. It was Seti I's tomb. It was bare. That, too, had been rifled. It is a large vault and the light came from a shaft of a pillar high above ground. Through the center of that pillar the light—a sort of dim gray twilight—was coming.

"By this time I was tired, so I sat down to rest. Maybe I fell asleep. I don't know. But I woke to hear the trickling of water. You know it was a common trick for the priests who buried ancient royalty in Egypt to sink wells near the place so that the tomb's existence might be disguised. Well, I listened, and I heard water trickling. I went round that chamber diligently and tapped every stone. One of them sounded hollow.

"It was just on the level with the floor. I removed it and found that I was faced with a flight of steps. I mounted them. They were dark, but dry—dry as dust. They led me into a passage and I walked slowly, for I was beginning to fear that I might lose my way. The whole of the mountain over there is tunneled with such passages. I came to a blank wall again. This one took me longer to break down, but the thought of what might be on the opposite side acted like wine in my veins. I worked hard and I got through once more. I was—where do you think?"

Both his listeners shook their heads; but Borden, not knowing the tale, had his eyes fastened on those of Dalling.

"I was in the chamber which you are digging for now. You have reached it from the top. I reached it by the way the priests went all these years ago."

"Impossible!" cried Jordan.

"It's true, anyway. I have that mountain and valley so worked out to a fraction that I know every yard of it, or seem to know it. But that's not what I wanted to tell you, sir. I was to tell you about Sais. Ah, Sais!"

He dropped his head in his hands again and remained as if he was shutting out some sight from his vision; or perhaps he was conjuring up some sight which he could best visualize when his face was covered.

"You've heard of Queen Hatshopsitu?" he asked suddenly. "She's called the Catherine II of Egypt."

Borden nodded and smiled.

"She reigned in Thebes about 1530 B.C.," he said. "She completed the work of her father, Tetuhtimes I in erecting the temples of Thebes and Karnak. She desired to be thought a man by her people and she claimed that her daughters

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were direct descendants of the Sun God Amon Ra.

"I SEE you know of this wonderful queen," went on Dalling. "There is no record of whom her daughters married. But we know that one of them disappeared. Sir, I found this girl. Her name is Sais. She lies over there in a chamber near the one you intend to explore. That is why I came to you—"

"But, Dalling," cried Jordan suddenly, starting up, "this is new! This is not your story—"

"Sit down, Jordan, sit down. I tell you I can't keep myself from being excited and I came to you now because the circle is complete. Oh, you still think me mad. I tell you, it is you who are mad. What was I saying?"

"It was about this girl, Sais," whispered Borden.

"Oh, yes. I was saying that I went through the inner tomb you are about to open. Yes, I went through it. And, there, on the west side there is a huge slab shaped like a door. I pried that open. I was working with the light of my torch, and as I tried to move the slab I turned my head and there, on the floor of the tomb—the tomb you are about to enter—I saw a man lying. I took my torch and looked at him. Then I bent down and touched him. He vanished into a thin layer of dust at my feet."

"Was it a mummy?" asked Borden.

"No, it was all that remained of a man. He had been lying there for several thousand years, Borden. The air of the place was so thin that he had been preserved; but the moment I touched him he fell away—just a flat outline of fine powder remained. I touched the dust and lifted some and let it drift through my fingers. Fancy that. A man lying there all these centuries and then to vanish just when I touched him. There was something eerie about it. At his side there was a piece of papyrus. I lifted it and read it by the light of my torch. This is a copy."

He pushed the parchment across to Borden, who took it but did not read. He wanted to hear the end of the fantastic, fascinating story.

"I stepped through the doorway I had hewn," went on Dalling, "and I found myself in a small tomb. It was quite small. I looked around. There was no sarcophagus, no coffin, no mummy. Just a plain rock-hewn room. In the center was a couch, the supports of which were models of the Hathor Cow, and on the couch there lay a form. I stepped across and looked. It was the form of a girl.

"She lay there, wrapped in her robes, her hands crossed on her breast. I stood looking at her and never had I seen such beauty. She was not pure Egyptian. She had a strain of Semitic in her. The face was pale, almost white. Her feet were shod with gold sandals. Round her arms were bracelets. On her head was a coronet. In her ears were earrings. And she was not a mummy. She was not embalmed."

"What?" This time even Borden's voice had a ring of disbelief in it.

"What I say is true, Borden. I had handled too many embalmed Egyptians not to know. At first I was afraid to touch her lest she should vanish like the man I had touched at the door. I stood watching her. Not a movement, not a sound in all that place disturbed us. I never saw such beauty."

The vision was still with him and his hearers could see that the strange dream to this man was very real. Over his face there crept a wonderful, peaceful, beatific ecstasy.

"Go on," said Borden, and Dalling came out of his dream.

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"It was some time before I dared touch her, and then I let a finger rest on one of her draperies, which were hung over her and reached the floor. The thing withered—just dropped out of sight and lay in a small heap of dust such as you might carry in your cupped palm. I touched her hands. They did not wither. I am not romancing. I am not telling you an insane imagining. If you would only believe me!"

He broke into sobs which shook his frame; but Borden, in spite of the whispered remonstrance of his friend, put out his hand and touched Dalling.

"Go on," he said once more.

"Yes, I'll tell you all I know. I became frightened, then I looked on her and—I fell in love with her. Have you any idea of what it is to have an affinity somewhere in the world? Maybe you haven't. What's the use of trying to explain? I can't explain. But can you think, just think, what emotion you would experience to know that at last you had met, or seen, the girl who had been destined for you at the foundations of the world—"

"Steady, Dalling," warned Jordan; but Borden held up a hand to his friend and nodded to the other man sympathetically.

"I can't tell you how I knew the truth. I can't explain. It just seemed as if all the ages, all mankind of the ancient peoples, all the world itself, had been made, all circumstances had been fulfilled, so that she and I could be brought together. You understand, don't you? They say that heaven makes men and women in pairs. Maybe there's a slip somewhere in the generations, even in the centuries, and one half misses the joy that might be his or hers—maybe the machinery has gone out of gear a long time back—oh, what's the use of trying to explain? I knew it as I looked at her. That's all I can say. Isn't that enough?"

He let his hands hang helplessly by his sides as he turned to stare out across the Valley of the Kings, who slept as they had slept through the ages.

"How did you get out?" asked Borden.

"Out? Oh, yes. But I forgot to tell you. I knew that if I came out and told the world what I had found people would laugh at me. So I sat down and opened the papyrus and began to read. After that I rose and bricked up the door again lest some one would find the chamber. And then—it was hard work—I didn't know what to do. What I had read in the papyrus made me feel queer. I sat down to think it all out. And when I woke my torch had burned itself out and I was in darkness.

"I started to search for my way back to the tunnel where my men were waiting for me. And I don't remember any more until I woke up in the hospital. And ever since they have thought me mad and they laugh when I tell my story. But you don't laugh, Borden. You are sensible. Won't you let me be with you when you open the inner chamber of the tomb you are working on? Just let me be with you, and if my word is not true that the tomb is empty then I will admit that you have a right to be skeptical; but Sais is there and she must be rescued. I'm feeling tired now. I must sleep—"

"You can sleep in the bungalow, Dalling," said Borden suddenly, moved with great pity for the man. "Better turn in now and I'll waken you when we go to the tomb. That will be tomorrow."

"You promise?" cried Dalling eagerly. "You promise?"

"Yes, I promise. If the tomb we are going to open is empty, then I'll help

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you to get back to the chamber where this Sais is," Borden said, and he led the other man indoors.

IN a few moments he came out and drew his chair close to the table.

"Jordan," he said, "that man's on the verge of a collapse through exhaustion."

"He has collapsed often. It's his own fault, you know, poor devil. He stands out there on the mountain and seeks aimlessly through the valley day and night, never resting, until he is down and out. You don't believe what he said, do you?"

Borden shook his head, and lifted the parchment, glancing at it.

"You needn't wade through that, Borden. I'll tell you in a few words what's in it. The man who wrote it was evidently the man Dalling says he found. Maybe he was a priest. The papyrus tells how Queen Hatshopsitu tried to make her daughter, Sais, marry an official, and the girl refused because she was in love with some one else. She fled with her lover and hid in the tomb which was being built. They were bricked up together. To save her from death by starvation the lover hypnotized her and so put her to sleep. That's the tale on the papyrus. Now, is it feasible that hypnotism could last all these years? Silly, I call it."

But Borden was staring at his friend.

"Who knows?" he asked slowly. "Who knows? We cannot limit such a sleep. The Egyptians were able to suspend animation for long periods—miraculously long periods. It was with them an art. All the priests were hypnotists. It's very strange—"

"All right, we needn't argue that, but to my mind the claim Dalling makes proves his madness."

"What does he claim?"

"Well, when the Arab workmen found him he had been down below for over a week, wandering through darkness all that time, lost and raving and shouting for aid. They found him lying in the tunnel. He was in a burning fever and was taken to the hospital. The papyrus was in his pocket. The doctors said he had had a touch of sun before he went down. His mind never recovered its balance. Of course we are all sorry for him. His agony must have been terrible when he was lost without light, or hope, alone in the blackness of the ages. There are few men who would have remained sane. When he awoke in the hospital he began to jabber about having touched his former self—"

"His former self?"

"Yes. Every Egyptologist knows that it was the ancient belief that the Sleep of Death lasted three thousand years, and then the dead woke up at the touch of Anubis to another life. Well, Dalling believes that it was himself who lay there dead beside this girl Sais; himself in a former incarnation, of course. It was his former self that he touched and resolved into dust, and it was from this former self that he took the papyrus. That is what he says. Personally I think he's crazy. But the papyrus is in Cairo and Dalling is here. Now you have the whole story, and you've brought extra trouble on us if you insist on his going to the tomb we are opening to-morrow. I expect he'll go wild. I'm going to have some officials down to watch him."

"I see," said Borden dreamily. "I see."

For some time neither of them spoke. The sun was sinking behind the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings and the great, gaunt limestone mountain cast its enormous shadow over the ravine, making it seem mysterious and terrible.

Jordan stirred suddenly.

"I wish Dalling hadn't come," he

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said. "He's brought a subtle unsettling influence with him as he always does. I'm going to turn in."

Borden did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the rugged cliffs now deep in shadow in which the tombs lay silent and weird. Over them was the profound slumber of the centuries.

The moon rose as the stars disappeared, and then Borden seemed to waken out of his dream. He shivered in the cold air and sighed; then he, too, went in to his sleep.

THEY were awakened by their Arab servant shortly after sunrise the following morning. Dalling was missing. He had gone out some time during the night, and the bed in which he had lain down was tossed and tumbled about.

"He's always the same," said Jordan. "Every time he impresses any one with his story he does something erratic. But he'll turn up later. I expect he has gone over to the tomb."

The workmen had collected at the bungalow, and after a short breakfast the two excavators started across the valley. The tomb they were about to open had been discovered by Jordan, and Borden had come out from England to aid in the task of uncovering the inner chamber and tabulating the finds. Both were Egyptologists of some standing, and all England waited on the report they would send home.

They reached the tomb entrance, and the workmen were let down the shaft cautiously, one by one. The two excavators followed. At the foot of the shaft a workman met them with consternation.

"There is a man down here," he said. "He is at the far end of the tunnel hammering on the door of the inner chamber. He is hammering with his fists. We cannot make him understand."

"I'll bet it's Dalling!" cried Jordan.

They hurried along the tunnel. It was Dalling.

He was standing at the door of the inner chamber, his hands beating helplessly against the huge slab and calling a name.

"Sais! O Ket Sais, nehes!"

"Sais! O Little Sais, awake!"

Borden laid a hand on the man's arm and began to whisper to him.

"Stand back, Dalling! Stand back! We'll have the door down in a jiffy! If she's there you'll see her! I promise you, you can enter first!"

Dalling let his hands drop. Great beads of perspiration were rolling down his face and his eyes were wild and unnatural.

"Let me in first," he repeated. "Yes, yes, that is the best way! You will see.

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 7, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

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She is there. But you must be careful not to disturb her with your hammers. You hear? She will know me, but she will not know you. My God!"

He stood aside, his hand in that of Borden as the workmen attacked the door. An hour's work brought it down and they were in the tomb of the king they had come to disturb.

Dalling was the first to enter, but he did not look at the chamber. He made straight across the place to another slab on which were a number of hieroglyphics. He did not hear the disappointed cry of Jordan. The tomb was empty just as Dalling had said it would be.

The ruins of the place were littered about the floor, mingling with the rubble.

"Look, Jordan, look!"

Borden had gripped his friend's arm and pointed toward Dalling. He was clawing at the slab to which he had rushed, tearing pieces of brick and rock away from its edges with his hands.

"Let him alone," whispered Borden as Jordan was about to step forward. "Let him alone, man! Watch!"

They stood still as the dead whose tomb they had come to plunder, they and the workmen, watching Dalling.

He worked with feverish haste until the slab was ready to be moved. Then he seized it and slid it aside—a slab which two ordinary men could hardly move.

Next moment he picked up a torch and slipped on tiptoe through the narrow opening.

Borden and his friend craned their necks.

The gleam of the torch in the chamber which Dalling had penetrated sent a warm twilight radiating across the floor and up the walls.

In the center of the apartment was a couch, and on it was what seemed to be a mummy. Then Dalling's light went out suddenly, and his voice rose plaintively, gently, with a strange soothing croon, like that of a mother over a sleeping child, or a lover returned from a long absence.

"Sais! Hat benben! Hat benben!"

The plaintiveness gave way to another note; a note of tenderness which made the voice of the speaker tremble and trill.

"Little Sais! Awake! I, your lover, call you!"

Suddenly the voice ceased. From the dark interior there came a slight movement as of a sleeper stirring. A small startled scream, then a sigh like the passing of a soul into the great beyond, mingled with the soft answer of a girlish voice.

"O almeh! I have slept well, beloved! Anubis calls us! Come!"

Then silence.

Ten minutes passed before the two listeners tiptoed into the chamber.

They found Dalling kneeling by a bier, his fingers clutching a pair of gold bracelets. No mummy was on the couch but a necklace and some ornaments lay amid a layer of fine dust. There was a smile on Dalling's face. Anubis had called him also.

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The Devil's Bodyguard

By CLYDE IRVINE

I NEVER find myself in the silvered atmosphere of the North of Scotland but I find the old tales coming alive around me as if Time had stopped centuries ago and had never gone on again.

And I never walk across the purple heather, or see the blue mist of the hills without wondering if this whole land isn't as misty as a dream and as unsubstantial as the silvered light that seems drained out of the sky and spread over the earth like a screen.

Up here, where eagles wing overhead and scream defiance, and every yard is haunted by a ghost, it does one no good to carry with him the cynicism or the skepticism of the lands below. For here there is something besides the natural law, something that evades logic, a queer, indistinguishable feeling that perhaps we do not know everything and it's a good thing we don't.

I'm saying that just now because I don't want you to get the idea I'm an old fuss-budget who is imposed upon easily or whose credulity is such that a fairy-tale will seem gospel truth to me. But, in the hills above Kilcraggie, *I saw fairies!*

There's plenty of fairy rings all over Scotland and plenty of tales to go with them. But this was the biggest Fairy Ring I'd ever seen and I've seen the one at the Eildon Tree and others in Perthshire where Kirk was supposed to have been taken by them and never seen again.

I stopped to gaze at it and the languor and beauty of its setting overpowered me so that I felt I never wanted to go away from the silver glowing around it, to the gloom and darkness of the Glen of Weeping, below.

And so I sat down and began to wonder about it and wish that I'd been born long ago when romance and glory and the Springtime of life was blooming fair and lovely on this lovely land. For those were the days when the fairies would come to the homes of the people and their little tinkling bells would be heard in the moonlight as they hurried about on their business, some good and some mischievous, but none of it outright *evil*.

That was left to bogles and to leprauchauns, to elves and wills o' the wisp, who lured drunken yokels into bogs that closed above their heads and drowned them.

AND as I sat there, thinking like this, the daylight was waning and the purple gloom that comes down on the mountains was falling like a royal cloak over the majestic shoulders of Ben Fruach while far away the setting sun, gilding the snows of the mountain, made the snow-cap gleam like a diadem, as if the great escarpment was indeed a king, looking over his subjects from an illimitable height.

It was then I saw the fairies.

They'd come out like little blossoms, green and blue and brightly scarlet, and glittering in iridescent beauty, such tiny little creatures that six of them could have stood on my hand.

The little fairies, dressed in their filmy robes that fluttered about them like the wings of butterflies, flew over the little men in their bright, tight suits, with their scalloped boots looking ridic-

Written especially for FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES

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ulously small, as they hurried about spreading carpets that shone as if they were made of jewels, putting divans and low, curved chairs in a sort of semi-circle and finally setting up a little golden throne that seemed alive with the sparkle and shimmer of precious stones.

I'd often read of fairy bells tinkling but never until that instant did I hear such heavenly music anywhere. Indescribably lovely, it seemed to be the very essence of music, the sweetest and most beautiful ringing of bells in which the silvery tones blended so softly that not one bell more than another was loud enough to distinguish it. And with the bells, like an undertone, there came the softly harmonious plucking of a *clarsach*, the sweet, aching beauty of the little Celtic harp.

How long it continued I don't know. I was swept away on its soft river of sound like a leaf on a mountain burn. But it faded to an undertone that was never silent thereafter and with a start I witnessed the entrance of the Queen.

How can any mortal describe the shattering glory of this tiny Queen-majesty? What words are left to tell of her pearly, glowing skin, the sapphire beauty of her shining eyes, the soft, waving wonder of her golden hair?

And her powder-blue dress, held by crossed bands of gem-studded gold beneath her infinitesmal breasts. The slim, incredibly tiny limbs on which she moved with regal grace to the golden throne and, settling herself among her maidens, raised her microscopic hand.

Through the muted music she spoke in a voice that tinkled like a tiny silver bell itself, the words clear and ringing, but on a note that never yet issued from a human throat.

And all the little men in their tight suits and swinging purses, their tiny scalloped boots scorning the grass as they leaped and sprang with agility, hurried to do her bidding. In seconds of time they had cleared a great space before her and from the sides of the ring there emerged a group of tiny horses, caparisoned in metal that shone like silver, on whose backs there sat in miniature as gallant a company of knights as ever was seen.

These, with their helmets crowned with favors, their shields and bucklers ablaze with devices, couched lances leveled as their tiny steeds galloped madly down the center, presented a picture that stole the breath away. Coming to a halt they doffed their helms and dropped their bannered lances in salute to the Queen. I noticed there were seven of them. The magic number, seven!

These knights had no sooner arranged themselves in a line opposite the Queen than there came an explosion, a *soft* yet definite explosion, leaving a puff of black smoke eddying like a twisting snake on the opposite side to the shining fairy knights.

And then he was there himself, the Devil. Smiling like a cat and his dark face glowing with evil. Small, too, as small as the Fairy Queen herself, but tight and hard and bitter and sword-keen; the little horns on his head shining and the forked tail of him barbed and curved above his tiny cloven hooves.

With his long fingers, that looked like a bird's claws, he signed this way and that, muttering strange words and wherever he pointed a black knight on an ebon horse grew up like a funeral flower; shining black in somber armor and caparisoned indigo, with their helms beaten to the shape of old, blackened skulls and the ugly heads of vultures atop their crests. And each knight carried a flame for a lance.

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"These are my champions, O Queen!" the Devil said, smirking at her evilly. "These knights form my bodyguard. And as ye have challenged me to produce them and to fight for the souls of Robbie MacGregor and Sheila Cameron, so be it! To the victor belongs the spoils—but I warn you, Queen of Fairyland, that your knights engage upon this tourney at their peril!"

"For the which they are proud to cast the gantlet!" cried the Queen and from the fairy knights a bright mailed glove was cast like a silver streak, landing fair beside Auld Clootie himself. He picked it up and smiled and bowing mockingly to the Queen sat down by himself on a toadstool and watched the knights get ready.

AND now the lines of knights settled deep in their saddles, and rammed their mailed feet into the bucket-stirrups, couching their lances as their beasts pawed the earth.

Though it was in miniature there was a deadliness to the combat that robbed it of none of its beauty, for there is an intrinsic beauty in the sight of galloping horses and men seeking to kill for the honor of their chieftains.

Meeting with clash of spear and sword the white knights were o'erwhelmed by the fiery lances of the dark ones and their horses screamed little human screams as the scorching flame-lances pierced them. But suddenly, seeing this, the Queen called out and in an instant a ring of fairy-fire was thrown around the white knights, and the dark ones, in their turn, were screaming in the flame.

Lances were thrown away now and at even terms they fought as knights have fought for this many a day until the black knights were thrown from their saddles and beheaded in the ring. A gory sight and one I would fain not have seen.

And while this battle was progressing and the Devil was sitting biting his long nails and the Fairy Queen smiling like a small sun new risen there was sweet music beside her and I saw a man, like unto a human man, a dark-browed, blue-eyed lad, in the black and red checks of a MacGregor kilt, sitting plucking softly at the strings of a *clarsach*.

Beside him, her red-gold hair a flame on her pearly skin, the Queen looked as fragile as eggshell china and over on the other side of her there sat a lass, tall and straight and well-molded, her face anxious as she watched the battle, her hands tight clasped in fear.

This, I thought, must be Sheila Cameron.

It was she. The white knights had no sooner beheaded the black ones and taken the hellish visors from their faces to hold them up before their Queen when she screamed, a tiny little scream, and fell in a faint.

And there was something about the heads that I knew, a sight of their ghastly faces that I remembered. But I could not be sure. The knights rode round with them on the ends of their lances and the little folks cheered loudly until there was a little explosion again and when we all looked that way the Devil was gone. And what he'd left was a small stinking pool of filth that fouled the air until a group of fairy maidens took hands and danced thrice around it, when it went away, leaving only gray ashes where it had been.

The Queen turned to the minstrel and the girl and said, "This has been done as I said it would be done. There has been knightly contest between the Devil's bodyguard and my own and the knights of Fairyland have been vic-

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torious. Go then. Wander the mountains and the glens forever, Robbie and Sheila. And be not afraid, for your memory lives forever and neither the Devil nor his spawn will e'er harm thee more!"

The boy knelt before her with the girl by his side and the *clarsach* fast under his arm and she touched them with her star-studded wand and watched them as they rose up, the girl leaning lovingly against the man, and walked into the mist. They were disappearing, as everything disappears in the mist, when the sound of his *clarsach* came back to us, the tearing sound of a song that would pluck the heart from a stone image, to say naught of the vibrant, loving heart of her who strode with him.

The sound came like the keening of the wind or the sweep of the waters in the bay, soft and warm yet with grief behind it. A queer, halting sound that was like the minstrel plucking your heartstrings instead of the harp.

And, all in an instant, before you could say "Ten" it was all gone. Like a dream. Like the floating mist itself that came down in veils of grayness, covering it all beside me and making me shiver in the growing dark. Wearily, as if I had lived a thousand years and my bones were old and tired, I got to my feet and stumbled down the hill to Kilcraggie.

There, sitting in the public-house, with the smell of beer and whiskey and the taste of it, too, driving out memories of the wetly-gray hillside, I sat before the big fire with big Tammas Meiklejohn, the landlord, looking at me queerly.

" 'Tis a bad thing, sir, to be going to the hills alone," he said softly. "There are those who have never come back from them, and others we've found dead after many a day of wandering in the mist that cheats them to their death!"

"Yes!" I answered.

"Some of those—those that were still alive, I mean—told queer stories of what they'd seen up there," he continued, staring at the fire. "Daft-like things about bogles and elves and fairies, the wee folk, ye ken!"

"All nonsense?" I asked.

"Hard to say. You never can tell. Folks near daft with hunger will see many strange things. But one of their stories tells of seeing fairy gallants and devil-knights fighting as they did in good King Arthur's time. But that would be easy to explain. They'd seen the Well o' the Seven Heads and the thing sticks in their minds!"

"The Well of the Seven Heads?" I asked. "Where's that?"

"Right across the street," he answered. "That auld well with the seven heads carved on it. You've heard the auld story?"

"No! Tell it to me!"

"Och, everybody kens it. It happened lang syne when the seven big sons o' MacAdam, the seven sons o' a seventh son, they say, rode through Kilcraggie and rode oot again with Sheila Cameron. She was betrothed to a shepherd-laddie, Robbie MacGregor, who was a fell sweet singer and played the *clarsach* in the hills when he'd be watching sheep. They say he was taken by the fairies and came back with the gift of music.

"But, however that is, the Devil's Bodyguard—they were called that for the rapings and burnings and killings they did—took her away from the village and when Robbie found it out he went into the hills and was never seen again. Nor ever found. And neither was Sheila."

He paused significantly. "But, one day, at the dawn, the lassies o' the vil-

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lage found the seven heads o' the MacAdam men in that well, all bloody and wet. And even today a few daft-like folk will swear they hear the sound o' Robbie's *clarsach* in the hills and Sheila Cameron singing as she walks beside him.

"IT'S a daft-like notion, isn't it?" he concluded.

"Yes, it's daft. People who hear that must be very credulous!"

"That's so. Gullible, like. You didn't see anything yourself, maybe, or hear something like wind singing in the corries, eh?"

"No, nothing at all!"

"Oh, well!" His voice was vaguely disappointed, I thought. "It depends on how tired you are, I suppose. I've heard some queer stories about these hills, very remarkable stories indeed."

"No doubt," I said. "But I didn't see anything and I heard nothing you couldn't hear yourself."

"That's just it," he said as I went up to bed. "I've seen some gey funny things in my time that I never told to a soul for fear they'd say I was daft, too!"

"Very wise! Very wise, indeed!" I said. We gave each other goodnight and I went up the stair, the soft plucking sound of a *clarsach* ringing in my ears, the faint melodious sound of sweet singing going ahead of me in the dark.

And from my window, the moonlight streaming on it, I saw the Well of the Seven Heads—the heads that the silver knights had held up to the Fairy Queen as they avenged the sweet singer of the Fairy Ring and his sweetheart, Sheila.

It's the place does it. The land. The country itself. The old, old stories and the long, long memories that cling like the never-dying, never-still mists of the Highlands.

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THE SNAKE MOTHER

By A. MERRITT

One of Fantasy's Most Brilliant Gems Together with a Masterpiece of Weird Fiction

WHO WANTS A GREEN BOTTLE?

By TOD ROBBINS

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Will McMorrow

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

From The Men Who Make The Argosy, October 29, 1932

THEY were drinking Horses' Necks out of tall glasses—'way back in the Dark (or bock beer) Ages—and wearing bustles, whatever they were, and the family doctor drove a buggy with a drag-anchor (remember them?) so the horse wouldn't run away, when I was born in Yorkville between the East River and squatters' shanties in Central Park. Thereafter, I went to school, was fired, went to college, barely escaped being fired, and went to work in a bank, where I fired myself, thereby evening things up, and had more time to devote to driving an artillery team in the National Guard.

Being a real estate broker seemed rather hum-drum in 1915 with a large-scale war on, so, with 110 assorted horses in my charge on a tiny tramp with 40 Chinese and a handful of white officers, I left to see about the war. The horse-shipper—a jovial fellow with an alcoholic breath—bade me Godspeed, handed me a box of horse-medicines (dropped overboard in mid-ocean afterward) and went back to have another and figure out the insurance. Nevertheless, we reached France only eight horses shy. A record for those days. No doubt the shipper was disappointed.

From France to England is a step. From England to France again—in the King's coat at a shilling a day—another step, keeping step. Then a machine gun bullet and a sick, all-gone feeling. Scared, too. But why go into that?

Back in God's Country as an officer in the American Army. And after the Armistice (ever forget that night?) running an airplane company in Memphis, Tennessee, and barnstorming—before Lindbergh's time—through the Southwest at ten dollars a ten-minute ride. The airplane business was run into the ground (literally) so back to New York as a suburban real estater, a newspaper reporter (to get writing practice) and the building business again, superintendent of construction on tall apartments.

SOLD my first story to the ARGOSY in 1925. Asked—it was a hunch—a remarkably pretty and remarkably smart girl to deliver the manuscript. When, surprisingly enough, the editor accepted it, the girl accepted me in matrimony on the theory, no doubt, that if I could get away with that I must be good. I've never undeceived her about that. I've sold lots of stories since then, mostly to ARGOSY and I think she has never gotten over her surprise.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. McMorrow wrote some of ARGOSY'S favorite stories, including "The World of Indexed Numbers," which appeared in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES.

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, 280 Broadway, New York City.

MERRITTALES WANTED

Dear Editor:

Now that I have both of latest issues of your two fantasy magazines, I thought I'd send in a few comments and requests.

First: FANTASTIC NOVELS, September issue, 1940. This issue contained two stories I've been waiting for a long time: "People of the Golden Atom" and "Through the Dragon Glass." Well, I must say they were sure worth the wait. By all means, reprint the sequel to the Cummings yarn and, if there are more stories in the series, reprint them also. The other two stories were both above par. I especially enjoyed "The Middle Bedroom."

Second: FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, October, 1940: I've only read the short story, so no comment on the stories. I *will* say I've waited expectantly for both "Fungus Isle" and "The Face in the Abyss." I'm looking forward to reading them. It's really surprising to think I'm getting these stories for only a dime.

The pictures in both mags were really superb. Boy, we fans have to admit that you secured the best pair of illustrators in the entire fantasy field: Frank Paul for the science fiction and Virgil Finlay for the fantastic. Don't ever let them go.

How soon can you have the Merrittales: "The Moon Pool" and "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" with Finlay illustrations ready for publication in one volume? Bring 'em on as soon as possible. That's my answer to the question you ask on the Editor's Page. And, if possible, have a photograph of Merritt in that volume. As for the cover, it seems to me a striking color illustration of the Moon Pool could be painted by Finlay. You know, with the seven pillars of light coming out of the pool. Maybe you could even have the Dweller hovering over the pool. Boy, what a cover that would make! Won't you at least think about this suggestion? I'm sure other readers would also be interested in seeing the Moon Pool, itself, on the cover.

I'm looking forward to the reprinting of the stories you promise are soon to appear: "The Radio Beasts," the rest of the "Darkness and Dawn" trilogy, "Into the Infinite," and "The Spot of Life." Publish them as soon as possible.

Other stories which I cast my vote for are: "The Golden Blight," "The Fatal Gift," "The Empire in the Air," "The Flying Legion," and almost anything else by George Allan England. The "Palos of the Dog Star Pack" trilogy by Giesy. "Polaris" trilogy by Stilson. "The Second Deluge," "The Conquest of Mars," etc., by Garrett P. Serviss. Garret Smith's "After a Million Years," "Between Worlds," "Treasures of Tantalus." Stories by Flint, Farley, Hall, Rousseau, Kline, Cummings, Leinster, McMorrow, Coblentz, Fisher. Here's another vote for stories by Burroughs. I agree with those persons who have requested stories by Burroughs. I, for one, haven't read any of Burroughs' early Martian stories and am very anxious to read them. Also the Earth's Core stories.

Another story I would like to see reprinted is La Master's "Phantom in the Rainbow."

Abraham Merritt—everything and anything you have on hand or can get hold of is welcome. I would especially like to see reprinted "The Metal Monster," "The Ship of Ishtar," (boy, and how I want the "Ship of Ishtar!"), "The Woman of the Wood," and "Seven Footprints to Satan." If and when you reprint "Seven Footprints to Satan" please use the Finlay illustrations which he did for the *Argosy* reprint of this story last year. By the way, if Merritt ever finishes those three stories, I hope you publish them in F.N. or F.F.M., with Finlay illustrations.

ARTHUR SAHA.

2828 3rd Ave. E.,
Hibbing, Minn.

"FACE" COVER PERFECT

Having just finished the latest issue of my favorite mag I could not resist writing a letter (my first) to congratulate you.

The cover by Finlay is the best yet. The "Face" was done in the characteristic style of Elliot Dold, Jr. How about letting him illustrate a few of the stories?

As for the stories, just keep up the good work. I am against having new stories published alongside the classics. Why not another companion magazine publishing new stories only?

I would like to hear from any of the readers who have back issues of British Science Fiction magazines for sale.

THOMAS ASHER.

418 Ky. Ave.
Pineville, Ky.

"SPOT OF LIFE" WANTED

I am writing to you as, I believe, one of your youngest readers. I am fifteen years old.

I am very pleased with this issue of F.F.M.

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"The Face in the Abyss" was much better than I expected. "Fungus Isle" was excellent, and I thought that "Out of the Dark" was an exceedingly good story for its size.

This is the first issue of any magazine, including yours, that I liked from cover to cover.

You wished to know about a reprint of the "Moon Pool" and "The Conquest of the Moon Pool." I think this would be a very good plan. I was not acquainted with your magazine at the time these stories were printed and therefore missed them.

I am anxiously awaiting the printing of "The Spot of Life."

ROBERT THOMPSON.

401 North 10th St.,
Enid, Okla.

"FACE IN ABYSS" BEAUTIFUL

I have just finished reading the Oct. issue of F.F.M. and I think it is the best issue you have ever produced, mainly because it contains one of the most weirdly beautiful stories I have ever read, "The Face in the Abyss." I am very glad that you are to publish the sequel to the story in the Nov. issue of FANTASTIC NOVELS. It would be terrible to wait any longer.

Readers of Fantasy owe the Frank A. Munsey Co. a debt of gratitude they can never repay for bringing back the great classics of yesterday. The fantasy and science fiction that is being written today cannot compare with the great stories that you give us in your two wonderful magazines.

I have only two complaints to make, and they are the untrimmed edges on F.F.M. and the long wait between issues.

I would like very much to see F.F.M. as a bi-weekly or better still a weekly, and F.N. as a monthly. With these two faults corrected everything would be perfect.

GERARD LERNER.

266 Crandall Ave.,
Youngstown, Ohio.

"MAN WHO MASTERED TIME"—RIGHT

With eleven issues of your fantasy mags, F.F.M. and F.N., beside me, I believe it's time to write another letter of comment. A new issue (Oct.) of F.F.M. should have hit the local stands today, but for some reason it's late. However, of those thus far issued, none has been disappointing in any way. And I say that despite the fact that in those eleven issues you've published only eight stories (six shorts and two novelets) which were not already in my collection.

I'm especially glad to see you issuing FANTASTIC NOVELS. For the novels are unquestionably the cream of the fantastic classics. Your selection for the first two issues was excellent. However, I note your statement that there is a sequel to "The People of the Golden Atom"—and that is not so! In 1929 ARGOSY published "The Princess of the Atom," but it has absolutely no connection with the novel you just published. It does take place in an atomic world, but otherwise there's no resemblance between the two tales. So, if you want to publish another of Cummings' novels soon, use one of his others, something of a different type. "The Fire People," "The Man Who Mastered Time" or "A Brand New World" are swell yarns. Sa-ay—maybe you call "The Man Who Mastered Time" the sequel to "The People"! I'll bet a two cent cigar that that's it. And that'd be okay. It has the same characters.

Why not a little more variety as to authors of your feature novels? What about Francis Stevens, Victor Rousseau, Garrett P. Serviss, J. U. Giesy, etc.? For some of the novels for your next ten issues of FANTASTIC NOVELS I suggest the following:

"Palos of the Dog Star Pack" by J. U. Giesy, "Citadel of Fear" by Francis Stevens, "The Sea Demons" by Victor Rousseau, "The Torch" by Jack Bechdolt, "A Columbus of Space" by Garrett P. Serviss, "Treasures of Tantalus" (sequel to "On the Brink of 2000") by Garret Smith, "Judith of Babylon" by Perley Poore Sheehan, and "The Empire in the Air" by George Allan England.

And for your feature novels or novelets for FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, some of the following:

"Polaris—of the Snows" by Charles B. Stilson, "Claimed" by Francis Stevens (a *wonderful* story), "The Planeteer" by Homer Eon Flint, "The Sun-Makers" by William F. McMorrow, "Worlds Within Worlds" by Philip M. Fisher, Jr., "Safe and Sane" by Tod Robbins—as well as England's "Beyond the Great Oblivion" and "The Afterglow." And how about the sequels to "The Lord of Death"—namely, "The Queen of Life," "The Devolutionist" and "The Emancipatrix"?

Something else. For your next A. Merritt novel, after "The Snake Mother," that is, I suggest "The Metal Emperor."

A word about your illustrators. Paul is good, but Finlay is incomparable. Need more be said? And why not use actual color illustrations on the cover instead of these "line drawing-ben day" affairs? Like the August, 1940, issue of F.F.M., which was excellent.

So now, after all this, continue doing as you please—for you're doing a swell job.

L. A. E.

ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on completing your first year of reprinting old classic fantasies. With such a rise in quality there is no doubt that your magazine will be long lived. I can hardly wait for each issue—oh, if they were only each printed monthly, happy days!

Your last two issues were tops, two longer complete stories and one short is the best idea yet. Please print every story written by Merritt, as he is, in my opinion, the best fantastic writer of them all.

A good idea would be to print sequels in their respective order in following issues. This would help us to keep the complete details of the story in mind.

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Outside of the stories mentioned by other readers, I would like to see printed in complete form Fred MacIsaac's "Lost Land of Atzlan" (1933) and A. Merritt's "Burn, Witch, Burn" (1932) if these stories are not too new to be reprinted as yet. Please add the stories of Erle Stanley Gardner and Victor Rousseau to your list.

My choice for the best stories of the year is:

The Moon Pool—Merritt, Girl in the Golden Atom—Cummings, Conquest of the Moon Pool—Merritt, The Radio Man—Farley, Lord of Death—Flint, The Planet Juggler—Frederick, Devil of the Western Sea—Fisher, Sunken Cities—Newton, Darkness and Dawn—England, Fungus Isle—Fisher.

As this is the only magazine I save, there must be a reason. The only one I know of is the quality of the material printed. Please keep up your splendid work.

VERNON ALBRECHT.

21 Second Ave.,
Halethorpe, Maryland.

THAT WONDERFUL FINLAY

I've just received the latest FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES from your office, and it receives my enthusiasm. My! Those Finlay illustrations are unsurpassable. It makes me regret that I haven't a thing, not even a fan letter in the same issue!

At present there is still a large stock of back numbers of "Golden Atom," fan magazine available at 15 cents, particularly of the first four issues. I think a lot of readers would be interested in having them.

LARRY B. FARSACI.
Editor: "Golden Atom"

48 Lewis St.,
Rochester, N. Y.

HELP!

May I say a word of commendation on the extremely "popular" (in these days) priced FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES? I did so enjoy "The Face in the Abyss." It was that story which first attracted me to science fiction. I am so glad to have the whole story.

Keep up the good work. I know others, like myself, are adding to a permanent library. I wish a story could be tracked down—I cannot remember the name, it was in an Amazing Stories years ago, of a little blue crystal which grew by gathering the calcium from the bones of people and animals and, finally, menaced the world. It was first noticed under the bed of a little boy, it frightened the dog, then it cut a mule to pieces, then the man accidentally took it to Europe and it fell into the sea. I'd love to read it again.

GERTRUDE GORDON.

441 West 57th St.,
N. Y. C.

REQUEST FOR OLD MAGS

I would like to see FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and FANTASTIC NOVELS each printed monthly.

I have every issue of WEIRD TALES except eight numbers; every issue of STRANGE STORIES and every issue of STRANGE TALES.

Now I will have, in the future all of the old classics that you are reprinting in your two magazines. What I am getting at, is the fact that I cannot get the stories that Street & Smith published in 1919 and 1920 in a magazine called THE THRILL BOOK. I had every issue at the time, but to my sorrow I threw them away. Now they are impossible to obtain.

They were all of a fantastic nature. I have written to Street & Smith; but, as is to be expected, they are entirely out of print. If you could put me in touch with anyone who has these magazines, I would greatly appreciate it. Another magazine impossible to obtain is TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY printed in 1928. I have No. 5, which is the only issue I have ever seen.

Your own two magazines, needless to say, are superlative. I was glad to see illustrations appearing on the covers.

HAROLD F. KEATING.

34 Arnold St.,
Quincy, Mass.

WE HAVE HIM, IN F. N.

Why, dear editor, haven't you engaged that capable young fantasy artist Hannes Bok to do some of your interiors and exteriors of FAMOUS FANTASTIC for you? It seems strange that a magazine of such quality has overlooked Hannes Bok for such a vital period of time. Why not match the superior calibre of your contents with the talented painting of our youngest and most capable artist in the fantasy field today?

In the one year that Bok has been in New York he has made tremendous strides into the field and his pen and ink sketches, along with his oil paintings, have proven to be some of the finest yet produced. He is a master of composition, color and line, of symbolism and realism.

Yes, perhaps I am prejudiced in Bok's favor because he is a friend, but mostly I proclaim him because of his marvelous taste for fantasy. He is definitely the star discovery of the fantasy field for 1940. By 1941 he will have overshadowed all others in the field. Why not snatch him up now and do yourselves and your readers a good turn?

RAY BRADBURY.

3054½ W. 12th St.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

"AN OLD FRIEND"

In all fairness to you and to myself (and to the readers of "our" magazine, in case this humble missive is printed) I should start at the beginning, which means giving you some information about myself and my habits, etc.

I am a young man of twenty-six, married, have a niece and nephew living with me, and am addicted to reading your magazines,

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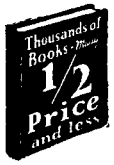

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FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and also FANTASTIC NOVELS. I am working, at present, as an Erecting Engineer, or so they (the Givers of the Law) term me. It is not a degree that can be won at college but rather by hard work (then they were mistaken in me) and the amount of knowledge one has in the particular field I am in. Now to get away from the commonplace, and into my idiosyncracies. I have always read, ever since I could remember, all sorts of imaginative fiction, especially of the type you print, and in the course of my wanderings through the bizarre and fantastic realms which my mind and the stories produced, I have come across some places to which I would fain return, again and again.

One of these places is the region in which we both found the "Moon Pool," and I am sure that all of the readers of "our" magazines will agree at some future date you should print all the Moon Pool series in one complete story in your (I mean "our") FANTASTIC NOVELS magazine. As for the story, "The Blind Spot," I am sure that my humble (ahem) comments could not in any way change the opinion of our fellow readers. I do say this much, though.

I believe I shall go a long way through life before I will, if ever, find a story that has been more well written, or more subtly suggestive of biographical truth rather than fiction. It is needless to write (but I'm writing it anyway) that I am eagerly awaiting the sequel to that magnificent novel, as well as that to "The People of the Golden Atom." There is only one bit of unfavorable comment that I must make. "Our" policy of publishing the two magazines every two months is going to meet with a lot of opposition from our readers as I am quite sure that there are so *very* many old classics awaiting publication that I am sure every reader will agree that our demand for twelve such novels as "The Blind Spot" each year is not an unreasonable one.

Well, I guess that I've just about written myself out for today, so I'll say au revoir, and more power to you and the Frank A. Munsey Co. You may never have heard of me but I was then and still am

An old friend,

NATHAN BERNSTEIN.

974 East 179th St.,
Bronx, N. Y.

DOUBLE CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations! F.F.M. and its companion mag, F.N. are now tops in the sf and fantasy field. Complete long novels in each issue instead of those horrible six-month serials have reduced my number of sleepless nights to merely five or ten at the beginning of each month. In other words, I want you to publish F. N. and F. F. M. monthly. I also would like to see F. F. M. adorned with clipped edges, more illustrations per story (five or six full page will do nicely) no more printing on cover illustrations as on September F. N., and more Finlay. Use Paul for sf stuff only.

As for stories, I'll merely renominate "Polaris of the Snows," "Palos of the Dog Star

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Pack," "Queen of Life," "After a Million Years," "The Planeteer," "The Golden Blight," "Treasures of Tantalus," "Man in the Moon," "Out of the Moon," "King of Conserve Island," "Conquest of the Moon," "Conquest of Mars," all the Merritt stories, and, finish up all the triologies you've started. Couldn't Mr. Merritt be persuaded to complete those three stories he was working on?

You're the only editor I know of who gives the readers what *they* want, and not what the editor wants. And in following this policy, ARGOSY has become the oldest and most liked magazine of its type.

Thanks for a swell magazine!

HAROLD BERTRAM.

1426—11th Ave.,
San Francisco.

TO BOTH MAGS

For the last month I have been jumping around the country and have failed to get any comments sent in to you. It was not my original intention to send periodic letters to you, but since reading the various readers' columns I find it to be quite the custom with fantasy fans to do so, therefore with so much precident it becomes increasingly tempting to give way to the urge.

The first FANTASTIC NOVELS was a beauty, and "The Blind Spot" was everything claimed for it, and then some. It was without a doubt one of the best fantasies I have ever read. And the Finlay art work was superb, especially that drawing of the prisoners in the ring. Please don't forget that I have previously voted for FANTASTIC NOVELS to become a monthly (along with Famous Fantastic Mysteries if possible). Permit me to nominate "The Metal Monster" and "The Man Who Mastered Time" for early issues.

I have just finished the August F. F. M. and thought it was perfect. Both of the stories were new to me, so it was a double treat to get two classics in one issue. Paul's drawings for "Darkness and Dawn" were great, and those who say Paul cannot draw people as well as machines will surely have to revise their opinions after that. Please do not revert to short stories as features in F. F. M. even though "Finis" *was* a good story. By this I mean that one, two or perhaps three long stories should be featured, and then if there is some odd space left, use an occasional short story as a filler. "The Resurrection of Jimber-Jaw" by Burroughs is a short which most of the fans would enjoy if they have not yet read it. And again, don't forget we want one of these magazines on a monthly basis.

Finlay and Paul lead the field as science fiction artists, so keep them by all means, Finlay especially for the covers. However, a good artist which I have not seen for some years is J. Allen St. John. Is he still living and doing art work?

Finally, your selection of authors and stories are excellent, but don't forget Otis Adelbert Kline and especially his Venus trilogy.

CHARLES W. WOLFE.

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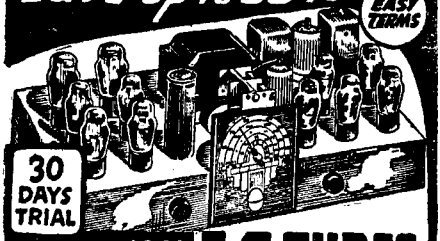

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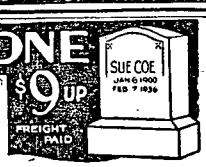

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SUGGESTIONS

I am very much interested in your publications and have a few suggestions which I hope meets with your approval since you started publishing FANTASTIC NOVELS.

The way you are now publishing short stories by Abraham Merritt in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, couldn't you publish the famous "People of the Pit," soon?

In your new one, FANTASTIC NOVELS. I sincerely hope you will publish "The Metal Monster," in the near future.

I for one think your two fantastic publications are marvelous.

RUSSELL VANDER CLOCK.
56 Emerson Ave.,
PATERSON, N. J.

CHANGE OF FAN EDITORS

Perhaps you have heard of me through Tom Wright, I do not know. However, I am writing you with several thoughts in mind. First, I was the originator of *Mercury*. Tom was kind enough to guide it through tough weather while I was over-working and ill. Now I am in a position to take it over again and hope to as successfully guide it through the ruts of fandom.

I see that you have given Tom advance information for *Mercury* from time to time and I'm in hopes that you will do the same for me. The next issue will be the large eight pages, neater, and carry a new "strictly news" format. It will appear this coming September 9th in its new volume number and new dress.

It is seldom that magazines rise to be the favorites with the majority of the fans in such short order as your two have. In fact, I believe that this is the first time.

The October cover on F. F. M. was excellent. While not being Finlay's best yet it was most outstanding. Incidentally, Finlay is my favorite and I love to see his work. The interior illustrations are the best he has ever done; those for Merritt's piece I mean. The opening one will be my favorite of all time. How I wish I owned one—or a dozen! "The Face in the Abyss" will long be remembered. There was *so much* beauty in one story that it left a tremendously strong memory with me. The exquisite phraseology brought delightful pictures to my mind. My endurance is wearing down until I see the sequel. Lowndes' bit was all right.

While I didn't care for Fisher's novelet as well, it was thoroughly enjoyable. Paul is unbeatable in his type of drawing! "Out of Dark" is the best short story you have so far published! With all of the fine material you have featured, that is saying plenty.

My only wish is for an editorial devoted to the reader more and in an informal way. Of course I could wish for a larger "Reader's Viewpoint", but then some small epic might be slighted.

Closing now with a fine sweet-taste in my mouth after the latest issue, I am—

J. J. FORTIER,
EDITOR MERCURY,
CO-EDITOR DAWN.
1836 39th Ave.,
Oakland, Calif.

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SOUTHERN FAN MAG

I would like to announce the publication of the South's first and only fan magazine: THE SOUTHERN STAR.

This magazine will be, with the exception of Northern guest articles, contributed to, and published exclusively by Southerners. It will feature an excellent and balanced assortment of articles, verse, departments, fiction and news. The line-up of departments is unique and quite original, including a column by one of the Nation's best-known and best-liked authorities on Munsey fiction, about Munsey fiction; a man known to the readers of all Munsey magazines simply as Panurge. Also there will be a department featuring graphological analyses of the handwriting of prominent fans, among others.

THE SOUTHERN STAR will have upon its staff such distinguished Southern fans as Art Sehnert, Fred W. Fischer, W. B. McQueen and Walter Trimbach. The first issue will appear during the last of December. Further information can be obtained at address below.

JOSEPH GILBERT,
Co-Editor:
THE SOUTHERN STAR.

3911 Park St.,
Columbia, South Carolina.

"KEEP THE STORIES ROLLIN'!"

In order for you—one resounding pat on the back! Editor, you amaze me! The August issue was superb in itself, but the October issue—sigh!

Here was my October issue menu:

1. One appetizer, extremely tantalizing to the thoughts; "Out of the Dark," entirely delicious, which provoked my appetite for the rest of the "Meal."

2. A cool, scintillating beverage in the form of R. W. Lowndes' poem, which trickled tastily into my cranium and tickled my mind's palate.

3. The main dish! *The pièce de resistance*, namely "The Face in the Abyss." Merritt, Merritt, Merritt! How I love that name!!

4. And lastly (but not in the least leastly) came the dessert; Fisher's "Fungus Isle." I polished this off ravenously.

After this tasty sustenance had been partaken of, I settled back, and striking my match (the Editor's Page) lit my after-dinner smoke (the Readers' Viewpoint).

Your whole magazine was "extreme satisfaction, intensely sustaining!"

And now for a few comments:

First of all, I agree with the letter of Henry Morse. Indeed, give us Burroughs, *But*—Burroughs *early* novels, namely "The Moon Maid," "The Land That Time Forgot" and "At the Earth's core."

Speaking for myself, I would like to see you print the stirring and superb novels by Balmer and Wylie; "When Worlds Collide" and "After Worlds Collide."

I certainly agree with the idea of reprinting the "Moon Pool" stories in one volume. That would be the greatest Fantasy buy in history!

DAN HEILMAN.

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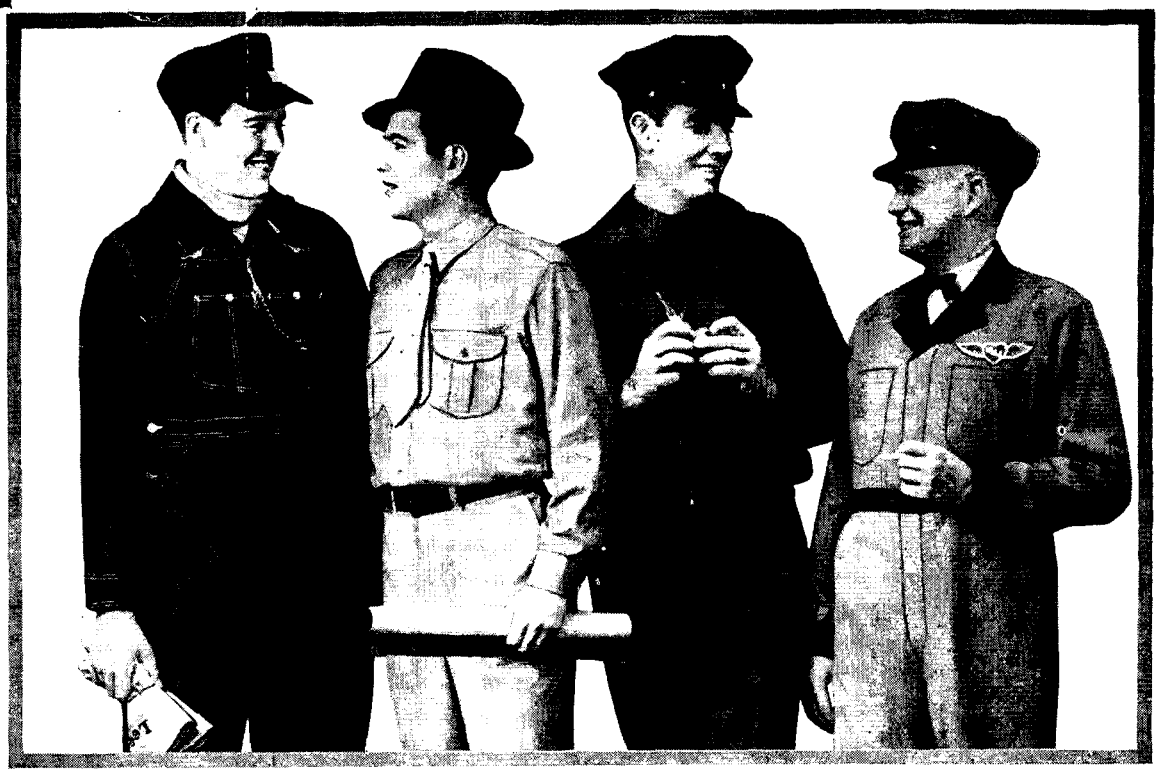

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